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SOCCER

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GRAND FINAL PREVIEW?

PAUL TRIMBOLI

*The dazzling Socceroo
stars in our exclusive
South v Glory eve issue*



SOCCER WEEKLY

AUSSIE & BRITISH SOCCER WEEKLY

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WIN FREE SPIRIT SHIRT!

How would you like to win your very own Northern Spirit shirt absolutely free!!!!!! Well, you can. Thanks to our mates at Grace Bros Sporting Edge at Warringah Mall, one lucky reader will win the Northern Spirit home shirt for FREE.

And for the runners-up we have two Northern Spirit baseball caps, one for each runner-up. The Sporting Edge have ...

- Northern Spirit: Jerseys (adults & kids size) Polos & shirts, Flags, Caps, Stubbie Holders, Marconi/Sydney Olympic Polo shirts, Balls Caps, Sydney Utd, Perth Glory, South Melbourne jerseys.

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- Manchester United Home/Away/Third and long-sleeve home shirt, plus Chelsea, Celtic and a huge range of Umbro training jerseys, and shorts in a big range of colours. Plus more on



Grace Bros' Angela in amongst all the Soccer gear at the store.

the way. And don't forget Grace Bros city store (level 4) has a great range of Soccer gear, including polo shirts from Sydney Olympic and Marconi.

And don't worry, if you live a distance from the Warringah Shopping Centre, any Grace Bros in Sydney will get the gear from another store if need be.

To win this great competition simply do this: send in an envelope to OH BABY! WANT MY SPIRIT SHIRT COMP. SOCCER WEEKLY, 7 GARNERS AVE, MARRICKVILLE, NSW, 2204.

First prize is a white Northern Spirit home shirt (XL). Second and third prize is a Northern Spirit baseball cap.

There has been a massive response to this competition, so to celebrate Spirit's latest win, we have kept this promotion open till next Monday. After the post next Monday, April 5, we will draw the winners and print the names in the April 6 issue.

So, read Soccer Weekly next week to find out if you will be getting about town in the coolest shirt and baseball cap, that of Northern Spirit, courtesy of Sporting Edge Grace Bros.

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FUTURE YOUNG SOCCEROOS NAMED

While the focus is on our current Young Socceros, the next generation of Australia U/20s, the Joeys (U/17s), has been named.

As always it is full of exciting talent. Westfields Sports High player Shane Cansdell-Sherriff is in (if Leeds let him play!) and Brisbane Strikers' prodigy, 16 year old Wayne Shroj is also included, as are former VIS graduates Steve Laurie and Joey Di Lorio, both currently overseas-based.



Wayne Shroj ... Brisbane Strikers' teen star.

Louis Brain
Mislav Saric
Aaron Goulding
Iain Fyfe
Matthew Milosevic

South Australia
South Australia
South Australia
South Australia
South Australia

Jo DiLorio
Fabian Lettieri
Steve Laurie

Vic/Werder Bremen
Vic/Werder Bremen
Vic/West Ham

Lucas Pantelis
Jade North
Wayne Shroj
Joshua Kennedy

SA/AIS
QLD/AIS
QLD/AIS
VIC/AIS

Naum Sekulowski
Radi Culibrk

Victoria
Victoria

James Johnson

Queensland

Dylan MacAllister
Tallan Martin
Shane Cansdell-Sherriff
Peter Gavahan
Gavin Hartge
Anthony Doumanis
Victor Fernandez
Shane Lockhart
Matthew Rosier
Jess Kendwell-Van Strattan

New South Wales
New South Wales
New South Wales
New South Wales
New South Wales
New South Wales
New South Wales
New South Wales
New South Wales

NEXT WEEK...

FROM GERMANY

PAUL AGOSTINO, PLUS

SOCCER SPICE

RETURNS AND COSMOS'

SALVATION,

IVO DE JESUS

REMINDER

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Remember, Soccer won the Ch.7 poll
for most popular football code.

Australian News

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Tomorrow night, Bob Jane Stadium will play host to the biggest game in the Ericsson Cup so far this season ... South Melbourne versus Perth Glory.

Deferred because of the Grand Prix, this eagerly anticipated clash brings together arguably the best two sides in the competition.

This could very well be a preview to the Grand Final.

South and Glory have occupied two positions in the top three for most of the season and are recognised as having the two best squads in the country.

South Melbourne officials are predicting their biggest crowd of the season for this blockbuster.

They're keen to create a similar atmosphere that visiting teams are greeted with at Perth Oval and want every South Melbourne fan to get there for the big game.

After a bit of a dip in form, the Glory are well and

This is **BIG!**

truly back on track as they gear up for their first finals appearance in their short history.

Coach Bernd Stange seems to have the squad firing on all cylinders, despite missing stars John Markovski and Troy Halpin.

While these two players have hardly been missed, recent acquisition, Alistair Edwards, has thrived since joining the Glory.

The game also marks a return to Bob Jane Stadium for Glory's Con Boutsianis.

Boutsianis, the hero of South Melbourne's Grand Final victory over Carlton last season, has been in a rich vein of form for his new club, scoring nine goals

along the way.

Another player who has found the net regularly is South Melbourne striker Michael Curcija.

Curcija says that the whole team is revved up for what is an important game for South.

"Considering our recent results, it's a very important game for us" said Curcija.

"Perth have been creeping up on us and if we can win it will give us a little gap so we can get that 1st or 2nd spot on the table."

Curcija says that Glory's goalscoring potential is their most dangerous weapon with players like Boutsianis, Vas Kalogeracos and Bobby Despotovski being able to find the net on a regular basis.

Most observers think that South are yet to match their championship winning form from last year, but Curcija says that they've been getting results under some difficulty.

"The only difference between this season and last is that we haven't quite had the attacking we had last year.

"The offset of that has been that we've become defensively stronger.

"Also, our squad has been unsettled with players injured or leaving and to still keep on getting results has been an achievement."

After an average season last year, Curcija has turned it around, hitting double figures in the goalscoring department.

His partnership with Vaughan Coveny seems to get better all the time.

"We've both been at the club for a few years now



Michael Curcija ... "Considering our recent results, it's a very important game for us."

and we're starting to get to know each other's game well.

"I think we make a good combination. We've got speed, skill and finishing, all important parts of a good partnership."

Curcija says that there is no reason why South can't go back-to-back.

"Everyone's getting along well on and off the park and everyone's making their contribution, even those who come off the bench."

A win against Glory will go a long way to securing one of the top two spots.

That's Wednesday night, 7.30, at Bob Jane Stadium, a game not to be missed.

YOUNG SOCCEROOS UPDATE

What a pity the WYC 99 wasn't staged in Holland! The Young Socceroos, who have just left the Netherlands for Nigeria after a three week training camp, were unbeaten and, from all accounts, looked very sharp.

In this last week the Young Socceroos played three games: drawing 1-1 with RKC Waalwijk (Colosimo 89), beating Feyenoord 3-0 (Sterjovski 4, Bosnar 18, Cunico 80) and Vitesse Arnhem 2-0 (Colosimo 27, 62).

All the players have spoken about the "buzz" they are feeling just being in camp for Australia.

Speaking to Soccer Australia, the in-form Mile Sterjovski said: "You feel like you're number one in Australia — there are so many

soccer players out there, and you're the only one who gets to put that jersey on."

Spirit's Michael Cunico has also spoken of the bond between this group of players. "Just about all of us are the best of friends and that makes a huge impact on everything."

"You associate a lot with the jersey — I saw it on all of my heroes, and now to pull it on myself is just a wonderful feeling," said Cosmos' Lindsay Wilson.

The Young Socceroos begin their campaign this weekend against Saudi Arabia.

See page 23 of Soccer Weekly for all your Nigeria 99 WYC information, and page 8 for the Les

Scheinfug interview. Soccer Weekly will have regular news on the team during the Cup.



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Australian News

KENNETT WANTS WORLD CUP

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett said that he would like to see Australia bid for the 2010 World Cup. Getting the World Cup, the world's biggest sporting event, has been uppermost in the Premier's mind for a few years now.

In 1995, Victoria was at the centre of a proposed bid to bring the 2002 Cup to Australia, but it never received the backing of Soccer Australia and did not go ahead.

Speaking at Bob Jane Stadium when South Melbourne played Adelaide City, Mr Kennett said the hope of Australia holding a World Cup, was a realistic one.

"We were given bad information by the board of Soccer Australia, we should have gone for the 2002 World Cup" said Mr Kennett.

"I keep kicking myself every time I think about it. Had we gone for 2002, we easily would have got it.

Mr Kennett said he "would love to have the World Cup here", but says it will take a lot of money just to bid to have the World Cup in Australia.

"We've got to have a real understanding that we've got a real chance of getting it.

"We have to get Soccer Australia on-side and we have to commit a lot of money to win it. We've spent \$8 million on our Commonwealth Games bid and it will cost between that amount and \$20 million just to bid.

"I would want to do a proper evaluation of the costs before I threw good public money into the campaign."

Mr Kennett said that Australia has much to offer a World Cup.

"It's a possibility. It will take an awful lot of work, this is a very big industry. Other countries may be able to dramatically outbid us so we've got to be able to have something else to offer than hard cash.

"We've got to offer atmosphere, security, hospitality and value for money.

"The costs that the teams playing in the next World Cup in Japan and South Korea will be enormous, whereas here, it will be cheaper.

"We have the facilities, we should be able to hold it."

Mr Kennett, South Melbourne's number one ticket holder and enthusiastic soccer follower, also said that upgrades to the pitch at Bob Jane Stadium should take place when the season finishes.

Perhaps a little upset that the intended game between the Premier's eleven and the Victorian Police side didn't take place because of the poor condition of the ground, Mr Kennett said that it was essential the surface was fixed.



The pitch has never been quite right ever since the ground opened, where poor drainage has seen it retain water on top of the pitch whenever it rained.

"It's got to be repaired" said Mr Kennett. "Given that Olympic soccer is here next year, and this ground will be used as a training venue.

"We've got to move quickly at the end of the season. It must be ripped up and re-laid before winter."

As to additional seats and stands at the ground, Mr Kennett said that there were no plans to upgrade the stadium at this stage.

"The first priority is to get the pitch right. We can't develop on the north side of the ground (the opposite side of the grandstand), it will destroy the view (the view from the grandstand looks right into the city).

"There is a possibility of doing something at the ends of the ground, but I don't think anything will happen to the north side of the ground."

Mr Kennett also said that he would like to see Carlton also playing at Bob Jane Stadium.

"The important thing is to utilise the ground properly. You would get more value out of the ground, share the infrastructure and share the costs.

"This is going to be the best soccer venue in Victoria."

As for South Melbourne, Mr Kennett has tipped them to win the championship this year.

"I think we'll see back-to-backs. We've had a consistent year. We've got a coach who is second to none and players who are performing well but there's a long way to go in the season."

South Melbourne is home to Perth Glory tomorrow night (Wed). The kick-off is 7.30pm.

TEEN SPIRIT

By Jill Smith

Playing for a youth team of one of the professional clubs in Australia is a huge honour, particularly when it's a club like Northern Spirit.

Their Youth set-up is one of the most impressive in the league, drawing on players from all over Sydney.

Two of those players are James Stubbs-Mills and Jacek Sobczyk, both 19.

James is not only a Youth player but is also on the first grade squad. His preferred position is centre midfield.

The Northern Spirit first grade team trains six days a week, some days they may train up to 4-5 hours. Their training consist of many aspects. "Our training involves skill work, fitness, passing drills, small games, a bit of everything ... they work us hard," said Stubbs Mills.

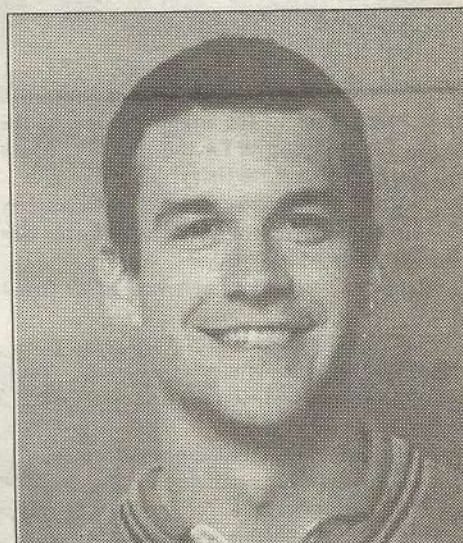


In the future James hopes to make the step up. "In the future I hope to get a constant first grade spot and to renew my contract with the Spirit.

"A highlight of my soccer career so far has been playing in the Golf Cup in Sweden. I hope to have similar experiences in the future. And of course a home game in front of our fans is always a highlight."

"I have enjoyed playing for the club a lot, it's a good club to be at, it's a bit of hard work but it's all worth it."

Meanwhile Jacek Sobczyk has been playing for the



James Stubbs-Mills ... part of the next generation of Spirit players.

Northern Spirit Youth team since the beginning of the season. His preferred position is midfield and back.

Although 'Jack' mainly plays for the youth team he also was lucky enough to play with the first grade.

"The most exciting moment of my career was actually playing in front of the home crowd at North Sydney oval in front of 17 000 people against Sydney United, it was an amazing feeling, with all our fans there to support us."

Jack's plans for the near future are to continue playing for Northern Spirit. "At the moment I train with first grade and hopefully I will be selected to stay on next year with Northern Spirit, in respect to soccer that's what I'm planning but who knows what will happen."

He not only has a future in soccer but is currently attending university. "I'm at uni at the moment doing a double degree in commerce and finance."

The youth squad has about 16-22 players depending on how many come down from first grade. The Youth team trains 3 days a week. Their training usually goes for around 1-2 hours.

Their training is very similar to the first grade. "We don't run too much as long as we win" says Jack with a smile.

When asked whether it was enjoyable playing for the Spirit, he replied "Yeah, I like it a lot, it's a great experience."

Only time will tell if these two talented youngsters will grace the hallowed turf of North Sydney Oval, a turf I had the fortune to play on recently before the Canberra Cosmos game in a Youth match against a local rep side.

The pitch is fantastic and the atmosphere once you are out there is brilliant. Just another reason why the Spirit Youth will be pushing the older players all the way in these coming years.

TV STAR LAUNCHES JUNIORS' SEASON



TV star Heidi Aherns with Marconi's Mark Hagger and Brendan Renaud (centre).

Congratulations to Castle Hill United Junior Soccer for taking an exciting approach to their season launch. They brought along Channel Ten and Sports Tonight personality Heidi Aherns to the launch at the Castle Towers Shopping Centre.

Also at the launch, attended by over 200 fans, was Marconi stars Brendan Renaud and Youth League top scorer Mark Hagger.

It was a great success, the highlight was Heidi Aherns being presented with a Castle Hill United jacket. Sponsors of the promotion was Kellyville Flower Spot, who also presented Heidi with a beautiful flower arrangement, that was handed over by the young players.

And look out for many other junior soccer stories coming soon to Soccer Weekly.

It's an exciting new venture called 'Junior Soccer Weekly'. Would you like to be a part of this?

Do you have kids who play soccer?

Call the office for more details on (02) 9562 0559.



Castle Hill United juniors with Marconi stars Brendan Renaud and Mark Hagger at the junior players' season launch.

Australian News

Have Your Say ...

As the NSL moves forward towards the business end of the season, the United football team under the guidance of prospective Australian National Coach David Mitchell, has once again shown they are a true force to be reckoned with.

The Soccer Australia hierarchy should look long and hard as the Sydney United saga closely resembles that of the Australian soccer team i.e.: an administration lacking funds, and financial creditability with little hope of paying players and coaches to the extent that these professionals expect at this level.



'Big Mitch' and sidekick Laurie McKinna, the vastly experienced and talented Scot have been there, operated on a very limited budget and still been able to take a side and produced a team week after week that looks every bit capable of winning the premiership.

Coaching is about performance.

Big Mitch has proved more than capable. Could Terry Venables have achieved what Mitch has done, would he have been even game to? I think not — certainly not for the money that Mitch and Laurie have been or not been paid. So for the money SA can afford, if they want value for money and if they want someone who knows how to win, well there is no alternative its just got to be David Mitchell.

He turns midfielders and backs into goal scorers, achieves four goals in a game when he is without five front line strikers. What other coach in Australia can get a team scoring three and four goals week after week?

Whilst Mitch and McKinna achieve at the highest level on the field the football club is in the boom and bust syndrome. The team is booming and the club is bust. Apparently the football club in he hands of an administrator, also, has no person looking after the interest of the players or teams.

If we are moving towards professionalism SA needs to take a stand, not only for its league but also to protect the valuable resources we have in this country; the players and coaches. One can only hope that SA has an action plan to look after not only the contracted players if United and other clubs fail, but also the talented juniors and, in this case, the very talented coaches who must not be lost to this sport just because they operated in a club that went bust.

In business if company is going out the window then one would think that someone else may like to step up and buy or obtain the assets of this club at rock bottom or bargain basement price.

You could probably arrange a lease of Edensor Park or move to a new location where you know you have a captive market. All you need is the resources the willingness an approval from SA and the United administrator to wind the club up.

Remember you'll get probably the cheapest payroll roster in the league and Youth teams that have talent — with several players who have represented their State, and also been members of the much vaunted NSW Academy.

With the obvious junior talent available many of whom may be looking at soon going overseas to play, there may be a ready made asset growth or ready made 'cash cow.'

Surely there is an astute entrepreneur who is capable of taking hold of this very lucrative opportunity.

Besides all this turmoil Big Mitch stand out like a shining light. He is an achiever as a player and as a coach. He knows the Australian scene. He knows what it takes to get results, he knows what it takes to motivate Australian players. He is Australian!

Who better than the best coach in this country, who better than someone who has a sincere passion for Australia and for winning.

Neil Gardiner
E-mail

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Australian Features

Sometimes, as we fans sit back and watch the goings on in this game, we have to wonder with astonishment at the stupidities committed by those who are professionally involved in it.

I refer in particular to movements between clubs, by both players and coaches, and those who are the catalysts of the movements — club presidents, managers and agents.

I remember that most amusing story in the early 60s when the Sydney club Budapest, the predecessor of St George and then in the NSW State League, recruited with great song and dance a player called Polyanski from Belgium. When after a few training runs it became clear the player wasn't very good, investigations revealed there had been a shonk. The player was the wrong Polyanski, in fact the brother of the man intended.

Stories at a higher professional level are not quite so obtuse, but nevertheless there are enough of them to bewilder one's senses.

Only this season there was the bizarre matter of David Platt being signed as head coach of Serie A club Sampdoria. This despite the fact that Platt, who had just retired as a player, had absolutely no coaching experience at any level. It was tantamount to a plumber being appointed chief engineer of General Motors.

Soon of course Platt got found out. Sampdoria lost match after match under Platt and he was sent packing. Embarrassingly, the coach who had been sacked to make way for Platt was re-hired. What possessed the management of Sampdoria in the first place one will never know.

Still on coaches, the hiring of John Toshack to take over from Guus Hiddink at Real Madrid in mid-season was another classic.

For a start why Hiddink was sacked, just ahead of the European Champions League quarter final against Dynamo Kiev, and with the league title still not out of sight, was hard to fathom (even if he did commit the unforgivable sin of losing to Barcelona). But then to replace him with Toshack, who had already been sacked by Madrid once, was even more puzzling.

Now Madrid is out of the Champions League, knocked out by the unfancied Dynamo, and the club is still no closer to overtaking Barcelona and winning the league than they were under Hiddink.

Then of course there are the weird player movements and from our distance nothing hurts more than when gifted Australian players make complete balls-ups of their 'big career moves'.

Last week we heard that Robbie Enes, the Northern Spirit's brainy midfielder and one of the best we have produced, finally got his big career break: he is going to trial — yes to trial — with Barnsley in the English First Division. Well Robbie, I wonder which of the Three Stooges is

Les Murray on ... choices made



currently your agent.

But Robbie Enes is not the first. Young Nick Rizzo's move earlier in the season from Liverpool to Crystal Palace was a mouth-opener. In fact anyone's move from Liverpool to Crystal Palace would be a mouth-opener.

But poor Nick, caught up in the Terry Venables hype and with no first-team place guaranteed at Anfield, got mesmerised. But if he had asked anyone, including you and me, we would have reminded him how Venables couldn't get Australia to the World Cup with its best ever team and how his only contribution to Portsmouth had been to send them broke.

Now Nick is convalescing with a broken leg, suffered in the rough and tumble world of English First Division reserve team football.

Other silly moves, too, come to mind. We can be certain that Mark Viduka would not have gone through that traumatic experience a couple of months ago had it not been for his stressful time at Croatia Zagreb. It was an affair which, at one point, threatened to kill his career.

Now I am also certain that Viduka — at least privately — would be the first to admit his move to Zagreb, when almost all of Europe was his oyster, had been a bungle.

As heartbreaking as any was the move of Steve Corica, when he joined Leicester, then in the English First Division. If I were to name the four most talented outfield players produced by Australia in the last 20 years, Corica would be one of them (Zelic, Okon and Viduka would be the other three).

His ideal playground would have been, say, Holland, good enough as he was to break into the midfields of PSV, Feyenoord or even Ajax (who had him on their vast computer data base of emerging global talent).

But no, he went to Leicester and goodness only knows why, and what buffoon, who had no idea of Corica's potential nor of his long term interests, advised him.

Corica later made another mistake when he followed the Leicester manager to Wolves while Leicester went on to gain promotion to the Premier League.

Now I hear that the physically more imposing Kevin Muscat is a big hit with the Wolves fans while Corica is not so popular. He's probably too airy, fairy for them. Corica should leave Wolves as soon as possible. He's too good for them anyway.

And if he did he'd be accomplishing an increasingly rare feat in modern professional football: an intelligent decision.

Email: lesjm@ibm.net

After our recent feature 'Why I love Soccer?' Eva Loukas takes up the theme with a focus on the fans ... Soccer fans are a special breed of sports fanatic which can be found in all corners of the globe.

Soccer fans from around the world made the journey to follow the France '98 action close up, including a huge number of Scottish fans.

The Scots descended on Paris, decked out in their kilts, beer flowing and spirits high, taking part in the lively celebrations. For them, the prospect of just taking part in the finals was



exciting enough with their team never having got past round one in previous World Cup tournaments.

Brazilian fans too turned out in force to watch their heroes do what they do best — dazzle the world with their super human football attributes.

worldwide as 'The Orange Army'. Dressed from head to toe in patriotic orange and many with huge foam clogs on their heads, the Dutch fans also made their presence in France felt.

This excitement which the World Cup generates and the passion that so many people have for the world game was expressed in many, often extreme ways by many fans. Just take the example of one particular soccer supporter nicknamed 'The Birdman'. This man is passionate about Colombia's national soccer team, so much so that he has made himself the team's unofficial mascot.

This fanatic claims to have dreamt that he was Colombia's mascot and so now, dressed as a native Colombian bird, he goes wherever the team goes — a true fan.

And speaking of true fans, another recent case of a soccer supporter going to extreme lengths to follow his team happened during last year's FA Cup Final in England between Arsenal and Newcastle United.

A British man and fan of the Newcastle team, now residing in Perth, Western Australia, flew to England for the match. Quite normal you say?

Well, actually, no. This man had no ticket to the match and planned instead to sit in his car in the car park of Wembley Stadium and listen to a live telecast on the radio!

Advertisers have realised the huge appeal of soccer and its influence all over the world has not gone unnoticed. Australian consumers were bombarded by advertisements using the World Cup as a selling point.

There was the Toyota advertisement promising 'great saves on all new Toyotas', the advertisement for LG refrigerators featuring soccer players, the chocolate bar, Snickers, with the France '98 logo on its wrapper and of course there was radio station 2DayFM with its 'World Cup of music.'

Soccer is *LIFE*

The sounds of the samba and the beat of Brazilian drums follow the team wherever it goes.

Back in Brazil as well, the people will drop everything every time their team takes the field. The entire country virtually shuts down whenever Brazil play with schools, taxi drivers and even the stock exchange ceasing to operate during their recent opening match against Scotland.

The colossal importance of the world game and of winning the World Cup to all Brazilians was also evident even before a ball had been kicked in France.

The departure of the team from Brazil saw every television station in the country interrupt their regular programs so that they could screen the teams departure live.

The plane carrying the players also made a low flying lap of Brazil before heading off to France carrying not only some of the best players in the game today, but taking with it the hopes of an entire nation.

Then there are also the famous Dutch supporters, known

Clothing and shoe manufacturer, Nike, has perhaps cashed in the most from soccer's appeal. There is the Nike airport advertisement in which the Brazilian national team, including star player Ronaldo, have a game of soccer in an airport while waiting for their flight.

And the most recent addition, the Nike beach advertisement featuring around 10 international soccer stars playing soccer on a beach decked out in Nike gear.

It is clear that soccer as a tool for selling anything from cars, clothes, shoes, chocolates and even fridges has been recognised and taken full advantage of by advertisers.

And we must not forget the entertainment industry which was also cashing in on the strong emotions that soccer evokes in its followers.

The official song of France '98 was Ricky Martin's, 'The Cup Of Life'. As well as being a worldwide hit, the song also successfully conveys the message that to billions of people around the world, 'soccer is life and the rest is just details'.

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Australian Features

THE CHAMPIONS LOOK TO NEW MARKETS IN MELBOURNE

Firstly Georgia, welcome to the Harbour City. Let's get straight to the point, how difficult is it to market a soccer club in Melbourne?

"In general it's probably difficult only because AFL is so strong in Victoria. It's interesting to note however that AFL representatives keep saying that the only football code that is a threat to them is soccer."

Really?

"Yes, they say that openly. They have been quoted in the press on a number of occasions, despite the overall perception that it could not be the case because of the crowds and the overall money that it generates."

"But Aidan, it's like comparing apples and oranges, as I say on a regular basis. These are two separate sports, they have different target groups and different types of fans. There are just too many variables that are different for a comparison to be made."

"And I get bit annoyed when the press keeps comparing us to AFL because I feel there is no comparison. At the same time it's hard to get space in the media for soccer with the sort of coverage they get."

"People in Melbourne love a great sporting event, nevertheless, it doesn't matter which sport, they will go to it as long as they put on a good show. My experience in other areas of marketing and sponsorship shows that. We talked with fans and many said that they go to sports events because they are being treated to a good show."

"And so that is one thing that I have tried to take onboard at South Melbourne. We try to put a show on."

What does that entail?

"Well now it's very much tailored to the family market. We have face painting and jumping castles, competitions and activities that will appeal to families. Because our games are scheduled for Sunday at 6pm, we try to make it an early night out for the whole family. Because, if the kids come along they will bring their mums and dads. And I have noticed a difference, particularly as Sunday is traditionally a family day."

"Also I have noticed a lot more females, young and old, at the games, which goes against that male tradition of leaving the women behind while they go with their mates to the game. I think this is a positive."

What is your average home crowd this year?

"We are about 8,000 this year (before the home game

GEORGIA LOUPOS HAS BEEN SOUTH MELBOURNE'S MARKETING MANAGER FOR SIX MONTHS. AS SUCH SHE IS IDEALLY PLACED TO COMMENT ON WHAT IT'S LIKE MARKETING AN NSL CLUB IN MELBOURNE, AND ON SOUTH'S PLANS TO BROADEN THEIR SUPPORT BASE. SHE SPOKE TO SOCCER WEEKLY'S AIDAN ORMOND AT THE SPIRIT V SOUTH GAME ...

against Glory), which is not bad considering the last couple of years it has been 5-6,000.

Last year's Grand Final had some crowd disturbances, do you think that the media coverage it got was fair?

"Let me say this, we have vocal fans, like in any sport, and some may have glamourised the events at the Grand Final, but you go to the MCG for cricket and there are ten times more arrests for drunken disorderly and loutish behaviour, but that does not get covered in the media like soccer does."

So is there a media conspiracy in Melbourne?

"I think conspiracy is a too strong word. I don't really think they are trying to put the sport down, but at the same time they are trying to do their job, so it may be their perception of what people want to see in the media."

So you went to Perth, how was it and did you see anything there that was interesting from your point of view?

"Oh they do a great show, it was just fantastic. But that's what they do and they do it well. You see Aidan, you don't go to Glory just to see a Soccer game, you go there to be entertained. It is constantly busy with things to occupy the fans. This clearly does not happen at other clubs — some of them look B-grade to be honest."

What is your marketing vision for the club in the next five years?

"I think the club is on the way up. There is a clear moving in a new direction in terms of the administration of the club, the old school has been replaced by a new generation. They are very professional and so with that support it will be a big future."

And your support base?

"We are obviously heading towards a situation where the entire community in Melbourne will be part of our support base. Having said that I don't want the perception that we want to disregard our existing supporters. Yes we do have ethnic ties to our existing fans but really all we want to do is grow our support base."

What is your vision for the future of the NSL?

"Obviously with the inclusion of sides

like Northern Spirit and Glory, it has given the existing clubs a kick up the butt!

"The implications are in attitude: it's a business and you have to start running you NSL clubs like that. You're there to make money and increase the profile of the club. And with the inclusion of Auckland Kings the bar has been increased even more. The league is doing well, and having the support of Soccer Australia is important."

"We all need each other to grow overall."

What about the other clubs in Melbourne, do you think there should be less or more in the Ericsson Cup?

"I think it's fine at the moment. Infact it's beneficial to South Melbourne to have the local derbies. Carlton's achievements shot up in their first year and I think suddenly people at the other clubs, South Melbourne included, thought this could be a potential threat. Competition is healthy and we encourage it. We want the other clubs in the league."

And finally, you have now seen a Northern Spirit home game, what were your impressions of their style of presentation, the crowd at North Sydney and the general atmosphere?

"It's quite good. Obviously it helps that they can pull crowds this big. The atmosphere is great and I am really impressed with the Spirit Point fans in the Bob Stand, their support is fantastic and it probably why our players are struggling out there!"

"However in terms of their pre-match entertainment I was expecting more, the skydiver's great and so were the juniors, but I had heard so much about their whizzbang marketing, I guess I was expecting a little more. In general it's pretty good, the crowd enjoys itself and it looks like a good night out in North Sydney, but I don't think there is anything in terms of pre-match entertainment that is so extraordinary."

"The fans are obviously turning up because it is a good night of Soccer."

Thanks Georgia and good luck on Wednesday night against Perth Glory?

No worries, it should be a wonderful night for



Georgia Loupos ... as South's marketing manager she is trying to put a show on for fans and broadening the club's supporter base.

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Australian Features



Welcome Amigos, we are the Four Diegos, so why don't you join us. Let's Samba, let's Rumba, let's La Bamba, let's Salza down the Copacabana with sombreros on our heads. Let's welcome Young Socceroos coach ... Les Scheinflug



LES IS MORE FOR YOUNG SOCCEROO COACH

Diegos: "It's another World Youth championship for you and another chance for Aussie soccer to display to the world the enormous talent that we are nurturing in this country."

"Along with the excellent athleticism, strength and speed inherent in young Aussie players is also a tendency to be feisty, hot-blooded and not adverse to seek the company of the opposite sex."

"How are the preparations going and have you succeeded in keeping the boys away from those disreputable Dutch houses of sin?"

Scheinflug: "You can be sure the boys have only got one thing on their minds and it's not the nightlife here in Holland. In our first two friendly games we won convincingly, 2-0 on both occasions. Winning alone is not everything though. The boys are learning from every game. The plan is that we will be playing more difficult teams as our preparation goes on. We think the boys will be well primed for their task in Nigeria come April."

Diegos: "Your choice of country to prepare the team caused a lot of conjecture amongst the soccer pundits here in Australia. Why did you feel that the team would be better off preparing in Holland and Spain when the tournament is going to be played in Nigeria?"

Scheinflug: "Because I've been there and done it many times before. Those who are criticising, I'm positive, have never had to prepare a youth team in these circumstances. It is important that our boys get physically fit, mentally fit and play some strong international games."

"To be able to do that well we had to come to Europe, were the players are going to recover much quicker after tough games. If we were to go to Africa, playing in 100 degree heat and 97% humidity, after two or three games the boys would become flat. This was our major problem in Malaysia in the last World Youth Cup."

Diegos: "In the past your teams have often gone to these big tournaments with a heavy weight of expectation on their shoulders. This time it seems that this team is going in as an 'underdog', with the experts not expecting too much. Do you prefer adopting the 'underdog' tag going in to such a tournament?"

Scheinflug: "Australia has always been the underdog. I know for sure that the boys will be giving everything that they are capable of giving in this tournament. I am convinced that we will knock over a few tall poppies. Our preparation has not been as good as Brazil, Argentina, Spain and a few other countries but I have faith that we will surprise a few of the more fancied teams."

Diegos: "It seems that the opposition is not the only obstacle that the Aussies have to confront at the tournament in Nigeria. It has been reported that the country is plagued with exotic diseases, rife with muggings and rampant with anti government rebels kidnapping any foreigner in sight."

"We just want to know whether you have packed the Aeroguard and brought along a suitcase full of ransom money just in case? What can you say to the boys' mothers to reassure them that everything will be fine?"

Scheinflug: "Since we left Australia we have been in constant contact with the Australian Embassy and they have told us that everything is fine. You can be sure that the World Cup would not be in Nigeria if there was any doubt about the safety of the players."

Diegos: "The boys are up against the

Guinness drinking Irish, the Oil drilling, Saudi Arabians, and the Taco munching Mexicans."

"Do you know anything at all about the opposition and as a coach who has been in this situation many times before, what underhanded, scurrilous methods that you have learnt over the years, are you going to employ to put them off their game?"

Scheinflug: "I have received two videos on Saudi Arabia. They look to be a good side. They finished third in Asia but they recently drew 0-0 against Korea. The



Les Scheinflug ... "I hope I'll be drinking tequila straight out of the World Cup. Adios Amigos!"

Irish finished first in Europe so they can't be too bad. Mexico is the CONCACAF winner so they are also going to be a tough nut to crack. It certainly is not an easy draw but I'm quietly confident that we can do quite well."

Diegos: "You have been quite vocal about Leeds United and the pressure they put on young Aussie players to turn their back on their country. UEFA has recently ruled that Central Coast teenager, Jamie McMaster is an England player and can never play for Australia again. How does that make you feel and can you tell the Diegos in confidence, what you will do to the first Leeds United scout that you run into in Nigeria?"

Scheinflug: "You seem to be very humorous today but you're lucky because I'm in the right mood to shoot Leeds down. I think they have to learn to produce their own players. They got Harry Kewell for nothing. We have not received a cent for Harry even though he is worth millions of dollars on the world transfer market. If they really wanted to help Australian soccer they'd put something financial back into the game here. We are more than happy to send youngsters overseas but only after they play for Australia."

Diegos: "Australia has traditionally performed well on the world stage at this level but unfortunately they've never been able to bring home the bacon, the big banana, the ripe pineapple — the World Cup. On any given day do you believe that this team can finally do it?"

Scheinflug: "We always go into a World Cup tournament aiming to win it. But unfortunately sometimes we have not had enough preparation compared to other countries. We are going to play against players who are full time pros and million dollar players. Many of our players are still playing youth league soccer."

"We are not in a favorable position to say 'yes we are ready to win it', but having said that, to win it still is a very firm aim of ours. You never know what is going to happen."

Diegos: "Thanks Les. Remember, use the aeroguard and stock up on those mozzie coils over there in Nigeria. Good luck and bring home the bacon. Adios Amigo!"

Scheinflug: "Thanks Diegos. Next time you speak to me I hope I'll be drinking tequila straight out of the World Cup. Adios Amigos!"

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Australian Features



The Four Diegos continue their VW Combi Van tour by dropping in on Soccerroo and South Melbourne star ... Paul Trimboli



Diegos: "More and more Ericsson Cup clubs are aligning themselves with major big money spinning Aussie sporting events."

"The Diegos hear that Marconi aligns itself with the Sydney Mardi Gras, Carlton with John Elliot's public speaking conventions and of course, South Melbourne with the Albert Park Grand Prix. Other

than the players being offered a Grand Prix cigarette girl each as an escort for the remainder of the season, are there any other benefits that rub off onto the South Melbourne Soccer club as a result of this event?"

Trimboli: "It gave us an opportunity to get down to Tassie for a weekend away with the boys because we

couldn't use the ground. We also got to play in a celebrity game with Michael Schumacher."

Diegos: "Did anyone lay a cynical tackle on him from behind?"

Trimboli: "If they told us once they told us 50 times not to go anywhere near him. They were pretty paranoid about him getting hurt. At one stage he

Spirit or Perth Glory and tap into the significant unquestionable Melbourne soccer market. Do you get annoyed when so called experts don't regard South Melbourne as the Northern Spirit of Melbourne and in your opinion, can Melbourne clubs purely survive by being successful on the pitch?"

Trimmers Taut and Terrific



Paul Trimboli celebrating his 300th game with his fans.

streaked away on his own and went to have a shot at goal. It looked pretty good until he kicked the ground and started hopping around as if he had broken his ankle. That certainly triggered a major panic in the Schumacher camp."

Diegos: "In the press in the week leading up to the race we saw photos of Schumacher having a kick around with the South players at training. We know that privately a couple of the younger South boys fancy themselves in the illegal drag racing stakes when their dads allow them to take the family Valiant Safari station wagon out on a Saturday night. Did any of the boys challenge him to a drag?"

Trimboli: "The boys didn't need to do that. We have an annual Grand Prix of our own. We get out on the go-cart track in the week leading up to the race and have a real crack at each other. It certainly gets pretty competitive. Everyone wants the trophy that's up for grabs."

Diegos: "In the aftermath of a controversial encounter earlier in the season between South Melbourne and Sydney United, United coach, David Mitchell blasted South Melbourne's tactics on the night and basically labeled you (in Four Diego terms) a 'low-down, dirty rat, referee 'conner', B-grade actor, a sly cheat and not a very nice man at all.' What is your reaction to his comments and has his attack closed the door for you on a career with the Wiggles when you hang up your boots?"

Trimboli: "I was a bit disappointed in the comment. But I tried to put them in context thinking well, they were a bit disappointed at the result and felt that a few of the decisions had gone against them. I personally think that it was a comment expressed in the heat of the moment."

"When he views the footage of the incident involving me that he was talking about, he may change his mind a little bit. I saw the incident on video and frankly, I was surprised at David's reaction. I make allowances though. Sport is a passionate thing and people do get fired up at times when things don't go their way."

Diegos: "South coach, Ange Postecoglou has moulded the current South squad into a tough, hard, dour, unforgiving unit that tends to grind out results. The philosophy at the moment seems to be to get the three points at any cost and leave the fancy boy stuff for the Bob Jane 'Sports Bar' dance floor. Is this professional approach a deliberate ploy by Angie to ensure the back-to-back Holy Grail premiership?"

Trimboli: "I don't think it's a deliberate ploy. You just take each game as it comes and play accordingly. It's funny because over the last few years we'd play entertaining football in the home and away segment of the season and then people would criticise us because we lacked fortitude come finals times."

"Now we are regarded as a much tougher outfit, able to grind out results but people are saying that we are not as exciting as we used to be. It's a bit hard to win sometimes."

Diegos: "The trend in Melbourne at the moment is that everyone wants to emulate the Northern

Trimboli: "I think what has been shown by clubs like Perth Glory and Northern Spirit is that if you want to attract the big crowds you have to do a lot of work off the field."

"You can't just rely on performances on the field. Sport now is competing with many areas of the entertainment industry, so results solely, are not going to guarantee that people are going to come to games."

"These clubs get out in their community and convince people that their club is the place to be. I think that Melbourne clubs have to take a look at that and try to do similar things."

Diegos: "There was a recent media report suggesting that an overhaul of world club championships by FIFA could provide an unexpected boost for the winner of the Ericsson Cup. The article intimated that there could be a possibility that South Melbourne could in fact, meet the likes of Manchester United or Real Madrid in the revamped format. Is the club taking this report seriously and have you brushed up on your dirty

The Four Diegos' are radio celebrities and soccer scribes on Melbourne's Stereo 97.4 FM Saturday 10 am-12 midday.

E-Mail 'The Diegos' on FourDiegos@bigpond.com

Until next time ... Adios Amigos!

'Spice Girls' jokes for David Beckham just in case, it does eventuate?"

Trimboli: "The boys read those reports and their first thought was 'Gee wouldn't that be fantastic'. Imagine going off to play at 'Old Trafford' or Spain. In reality though, winning the Ericsson Cup, unfortunately, would only be the first step in a long journey to play likes of Manchester United. I think the tournament would be structured in such a way that we would have a pretty hard road before we got that far."

Diegos: "South this season announced an official association with Greek mega club, Olympiakos. Now how are you feeling at present? Have you entertained the thought of spending the twilight of your career cruising around the Greek Islands and kicking a soccer ball under the Mykanos sun?"

Trimboli: "It's not a bad idea. I think at this stage of my career I might have to move into the area of looking after some of the younger players, as the liaison officer between South Melbourne and the Greek clubs. I can see myself doing it from a yacht touring around the Greek islands. It'd be great. I'd only need a mobile phone."

Diegos: "Thanks Trimmers, and good luck for the big game on Wednesday night at Bob Jane against the GloryBoyz."

Trimboli: "Thanks, we look forward to putting a good show on for our supporters in what should be one of the games of the season."

SOCCER WOMAN

WITH JANENE MARIN IN CANBERRA

BUTLAND COMES OF AGE

Aussie goalkeeper Joanne Butland has finally come of age. Since first being selected to travel with the Australian Team to the US Women's Cup in May 1997, Butland has bided her time waiting in the wings.

Now upon her return from the recent Algarve Cup in Portugal, Butland can reflect on the tournament with a sense of achievement, an assertion of her personal ability as an international footballer.

Butland had watched the 1997 US Cup from the sidelines, gaining valuable experience, but returning home without her debut cap under her belt.

The raw 18-year-old had suffered an unhappy start to the tour, taking her place in goals for the Under 21 international against the mighty USA, but coming off after just twenty minutes through injury.

Again selected for the North Korea Tour in August 1998, Butland again endured an entire tour on the bench.

"It's good to be on tours and at that stage I wasn't as good as I am now. For US '97, I'd just been brought in from Brisbane and it was a surprise to be there. Then in North Korea, I didn't really expect to play much but it was a bit disappointing.

"It kind of didn't help my confidence a lot. I found it helped me in terms of preparation, but not in terms of my nerves. But it's just making all those little steps — now I've got my third cap."

The tide finally turned in January's

Australia Cup, Butland named in the starting eleven for the opening match against Italy, her much awaited call-up perhaps a surprise to some against such a big name opponent. Apart from one fumble, Butland performed solidly, but tragically was assisted from the field after a mere 27 minutes.

The victim of a heavy ramming charge by an Italian striker, Butland's debut international came to a sudden halt. The youngster must have wondered if she'd ever make it through to ninety minutes of a game.

The resultant shoulder injury sidelined Butland for a month.

But this month's prestigious Algarve Cup proved the turning point for Butland.

A full game against Portugal was then capped with a match-winning performance against Sweden.

A fantastic diving save during normal time in the 1-1 draw against World Cup opponent Sweden helped force the game into a deciding penalty shootout. And it was there that the once timid Butland gained the plaudits of her peers.

A win was vital to gain the psychological edge over Sweden before we next meet in the World Cup. Anissa Tann-Darby missed her attempt from the spot, Butland then saving to keep the Matildas in the contest.

Still deadlocked at the conclusion of the five penalties, Butland kept her nerve and used her full reach to stop Sweden's seventh attempt and win the game for Australia.

"I was obviously happy to be selected against Sweden because we're playing them in the World Cup and it was a good game to go into and do my best. Their number nine was having shots all the time and this one shot flew through all our defenders and I saw it late and just dived on instinct.

"She's hit it so hard, but I got my hand to it and it went out. We'd been under a little bit of pressure and I wasn't nervous as such, but after that I just thought 'I can take anything they throw at me now.'"

But the pressure of a shootout is the test of anyone's metal, and Butland passed with flying colours. "Greg Brown had said to me to just pick a side and dive as you've got one in two chances of picking the right way. And it's trying to psych the others out. Anissa was standing in the centre circle before I made the save and yelled out as I got there 'Make yourself big Jo' and I stood strong — it made me feel good."

Butland explains how she noticed the last Swede looked scared and weak as she walked up to the spot. "I just kept thinking a couple of times they'd played the same corner and so I moved a bit over to the right. But for some reason I ended up going left and made the save.

"The girls all came running and Cheryl Salisbury lifted me up. That feeling stayed with me the rest of the day then things quietened down. Greg

sat next to me on the bus back from the game and we talked. It was kind of good to be the hero for once."

Butland always showed great promise but it would be true to say she was not always a confident player. She herself agrees with this observation and her telling saves against Sweden have made all the difference in assuring Butland, and just as importantly her teammates, of her international 'arrival'.



Joanne Butland ... has matured into a fine Matilda keeper.

"Playing Italy gave me confidence, then coming back from injury and getting the end result against Sweden was great. And the girls have more confidence in me now. I know myself and the other players know what I'm capable of."

Her long wait on the fringes of selection has seen Butland play second fiddle to Queensland teammate Belinda Kitching, a rivalry which first started back in 1994, her first State Team selection with the Under 19s. It's an odd situation to have two top keepers from the one State and be battling for selection at State and national level, youth and seniors.

"We get on pretty well together but there is that bit of rivalry — with me there is anyway. At training we're pretty good together and we're pretty good friends. Belinda has helped me along the way, but it's been a pain in the arse sitting behind her so long."

But of course Kitching isn't the only competition for Butland. Veteran keeper Tracey Wheeler is still well in contention and was brought in to the AIS for a few weeks before the Algarve Team was selected. "With three, it makes you want to train harder, knowing there are only two spots," explains Butland.

Only taking up the sport in 1993 at age 15, Butland made an instant impact and made State and national youth selection the following year. Soon after it was the Australian Youth Team for the 1995 Dallas Cup. An offer from the Queensland Academy of Sport was put on hold whilst she finished high school at home in Mossman, then the move to the big smoke to coincide with university, a degree in primary teaching.

The once timid and apprehensive Butland has no hesitation in saying that the AIS program has moulded her into the more commanding goalkeeper she is today. "The AIS has helped me tremendously. Just being able to train with a goalkeeper coach five days a week and with the girls, my confidence has grown 200 percent.

I've been able to take that next step. If I was still in Brisbane, I wouldn't be the player or the person I am now."

The 20-year-old from the sugar cane community of Mossman, north of Cairns has come a long way. Today she is vying for a place at the World Cup after a long apprenticeship.

AWARDS NIGHT Fundraiser

Dig out your best gear and book your tickets for the AWSA's Awards Night Fundraiser on Saturday night 17 April.

Following the success of last year's inaugural Ansett Australia Summer Series awards function, AWSA will host this year's celebration of the league season with a black tie do at Sydney's Rydges Wentworth Hotel.

The occasion will be combined as a fundraiser to help assist the Australian Under 21 Team to contest the prestigious Nordic Cup in Iceland this coming August.

The evening will culminate with the presentation of the Julie Dolan Medal to the 1998/99 Ansett Summer Series Player of the

Year, last year taken out by South Australian midfielder Sharon Black.

Everyone in attendance will have an opportunity to bid for valuable and collectable items at the fundraising auction.

Your mere presence at what promises to be a memorable evening will help out our Youth players on their way to raising the necessary funds to get to Iceland.

Please make your RSVP to AWSA by Wednesday 7 April on 02/6281.7999 or fax 02/6281.7975.

Bookings must be confirmed with advance payment by cheque to AWSA, Football House, 2/3 Phipps Cl, Deakin ACT 2600.

Ansett Australia Summer Series

AWARDS NIGHT FUNDRAISER

Saturday 17 April 1999

7.00 for 7.30pm

Brisbane Room - Rydges Wentworth

61-101 Phillip St, Sydney

Cost: \$95 per head

\$55 per Ansett Summer Series player

Includes 3-course dinner and drinks

Friends and family most welcome

Dress: Black Tie

NORDIC SQUAD NAMED

Australia has keenly accepted its first ever invitation to compete in the Nordic Cup, the number one youth event on the international calendar.

This year's Cup will be contested in Reykjavik in Iceland, 1-9 August.

The tournament is open to players born after 31 December 1977, ie 21 years and under. However there is also a provision of a maximum two over-age players born after 31 December 1973. The permitted squad size is up to 18 players.

The National Coaches have come to the decision that any player selected for the 1999 World Cup will not be selected for the Nordic Cup.

The final squad for both the World Cup and the Nordic Cup will be announced 14 May. The Nordic Cup schedule will see the players assemble at the AIS for a training camp commencing 23 July, depart for Iceland four days later and arrive back in Australia on 10 August.

The following players have been selected as the Shadow Squad for the 1999 Nordic Cup.

All OAP athletes who are age eligible are also considered part of the Shadow Squad.

Dianne ALAGICH	SA
Rachael ALLEY	NNSW
Amy BEATTIE	ACT
Louisa BISBY	VIC
Megan BOND	QLD
Michelle CARNEY	NSW
Alicia CAVANAGH	NSW
Kim CHANNING	ACT
Jessica HALFPENNY	SA
Danielle HEPPELRLIN	ACT
Cassandra KELL	NSW
Kate McSHEA	QLD
Kimberley MORRIS	SA
Amanda PARKER	NSW
Jodie RANDALL	NNSW
Anna RUOTOLLO	SA
Danielle SMALL	NNSW
Marie SPAGNOLETTI	SA
Stacey STOCO	SA
Sarah WALSH	NSW
Lynn WHITE	SA

SUMMER IS... ERICSSON CUP

next round

Saturday 3 April

Marconi Fairfield v Melb Knights

Marconi Stadium

Sunday 4 April

South Melbourne v Brisbane Strikers

Bob Jane Stadium

Gippsland Falcons v Northern Spirit

Mobil Park

Newcastle Breakers v Woll Wolves

Breakers Stadium

Adelaide Sharks v Adelaide City

Hindmarsh Stadium

Sydney Olympic v Carlton SC

Belmore Sports Ground

Monday 5 April

Canberra Cosmos v Sydney United

Bruce Stadium

Bye: Perth Glory

South v Glory tomorrow night (Wed 31 March) is the catch up game.

Please note, these fixtures are supplied by Soccer Australia, and are correct at time of printing. Please check local guides in case of changes. We accept no responsibility for any late changes to fixtures, or incorrect information supplied to us.

RESULTS ROUND 26

Northern Spirit 1
South Melbourne 0

Brisbane Strikers 3
Canberra Cosmos 1

Perth Glory 2
Sydney Olympic 2

Carlton SC 1
Marconi Fairfield 2

Wollongong Wolves 2
Adelaide Sharks 0

Adelaide City 0
Gippsland Falcons 0

Melbourne Knights 1
Newcastle Breakers 0

Bye Sydney United

TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Melbourne	24*	14	6	4	44	24	48*
Sydney United	24	15	3	6	45	31	48
Perth Glory	24*	14	4	6	53	30	46*
Northern Spirit	24	13	2	9	32	31	41
Adelaide City	24	11	6	7	37	24	39
Sydney Olympic	24	11	6	7	40	29	39
Marconi Fairfield	24	11	3	10	44	45	36
Brisbane Strikers	24	10	5	9	36	39	35
Newcastle Breakers	24	9	6	9	23	29	33
Carlton SC	25	9	5	11	43	40	31
Wollongong Wolves	24	8	6	10	37	39	30
Adelaide Sharks	24	6	6	12	32	39	24
Melbourne Knights	24	6	5	13	27	36	23
Gippsland Falcons	24	5	6	13	14	41	21
Canberra Cosmos	25	4	2	19	20	50	14





ERICSSON CUP

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WHAT A DIFFERENCE A WEEK MAKES!

NORTHERN SPIRIT 1
Marusic 11
SOUTH MELBOURNE 0
At North Sydney Oval, Sydney

By Bonnie Merslades

Northern Spirit's 1-0 win against South Melbourne at North Sydney Oval on Friday night places South Melbourne's reign at the top of the Ericsson Cup ladder in jeopardy (depending on other weekend results).

With The Bob Stand filled to capacity thirty minutes before kick-off, and a small band of South Melbourne supporters taking up a position adjacent to a corner, the scene was set for a lively encounter between the pedigree club of the Ericsson Cup competition and the new kids on the block who are making everyone sit up and take notice.

Just under 300 children filled the ground to show us the skills learned in the Northern Spirit Soccer Academies under the guidance of Richie Alagich, and the Spirit in the Sky skydiver loomed large out of the fading light to thrill the 16,543 fans.

Sydney turned on a truly splendid evening: warm but not hot, a gentle breeze, a clear sky and a picture perfect sunset. As a total package, it was a great advertisement for football — if only the North Sydney Oval was a rectangle!

Northern Spirit started the game in their usual confident and aggressive style, and South Melbourne seemed content to absorb the pressure, restricting Spirit to long-range shots at goal.

This was confirmed after the match when South Melbourne coach, Ange Postecoglou, said that they expected an onslaught from Northern Spirit at the beginning.

"We knew they'd be fired up after last week's match and we got exactly what we expected," he said.

If the defending champions also expected an 11th minute goal from 'King' Kresimir Marusic, Postecoglou wasn't letting on but he appeared relatively sanguine about the result.

Marusic struck after goalkeeper, Michael Petkovic,

spilled one of Spirit's long-range shots, this time a powerful drive from Paul Bilokapic.

South Melbourne stepped up the pace for a while after the goal was scored, but overall one was left with the impression that they were playing within themselves.

Their first shot on goal did not come until the 25th minute when Fausto De Amicis, after initiating an attractive passage of play from deep in South Melbourne's territory, chanced his luck from just outside the box only to see his short flash past the left upright.

The remainder of the first half was played out with a contrast in style between the bustling and busy Northern Spirit and the more laid-back and fluid style of South Melbourne.

Northern Spirit created another good chance when Matt Bingley made a nice move through the middle of the park, to combine with Langdon and Zane in a scramble in front of goal.

There were also several other opportunities which went astray through wayward crosses, or off-target hitting, or which fell to Petkovic's otherwise safe hands.

South Melbourne also had some chances, principally through set pieces which invariably aimed for Nick Orlic's head, and again through De Amicis who took the ball up the length of the ground alone only to be cut out by Bingley at the final shot.

South Melbourne stepped up their intensity in the second half as they searched for the equaliser. The game settled into a tense affair as South Melbourne, especially through the efforts of George Goutzoulis, Vaughan Coveny, Paul Trimboli and De Amicis, gradually applied increasing pressure in the Spirit's defences.

Henderson was called upon on several occasions, including to spectacularly tip a 53rd minute shot from Goutzoulis over the bar.

Having been thrown in at the deep end at the first game of the season in October, Henderson is maturing into a reliable and courageous 'keeper, who is also a great crowd favourite.

Bingley and Rudan also cut out a number of chances and were particularly attentive in dealing with the creativity of South Melbourne dynamo, Paul Trimboli.

South Melbourne's five corners to Northern Spirit's



'Hendo' ... he gets more popular as the games goes by, and is also one of the best keepers in the league.

one in the second half resulted in an equaliser in about the 80th minute, only to be ruled offside.

The ruling did not raise a protest from the South Melbourne players, but certainly thrilled the crowd who, by now, were beginning to hope that their team would hang-on to the one goal advantage against the respected, but dreaded, 'Mexicans'.

Their biggest thrill came from more Henderson heroics in the 85th minute when he acrobatically tipped a powerful shot from Coveny over the bar. This was South Melbourne's last throw of the dice.

Arnold said after the game that dealing with such a pressure situation was an important factor for the team.

"We've been working on our impatience. Last week [against Canberra Cosmos] and in other games we've lost, we have shown impatience when things were not going our way and we lost concentration and possession.

"All I asked for tonight was that everyone out there wanted to wear the shirt and wanted to be there. Look at the difference! We got the result."

Arnold praised South Melbourne and coach Postecoglou.

"They're a very good side and Ange is doing a great job. People talk about others for a future national coach, but everyone seems to ignore what Ange is doing."

MATCH STATS

Crowd: 16,543

Referee: Mark Shield

Northern Spirit: Henderson, Crook, Rudan, Casserly, Marusic (Watkins, 89), Slater, Arnold (Enes, 60), Bilokapic, Zane, Langdon (Moss, 83), Bingley

South Melbourne: M. Petkovic, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Orlic, Panopoulos, Coveny, Trimboli, Curcija (Teekinis, 68), Polak (Clarkson, 68), Goutzoulis (Mustafa, 85), Liparoti

Yellows:

Northern Spirit: Crook

South Melbourne: De Amicis

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: Henderson (NS)

2: De Amicis (SM)

1: Bingley (NS)

He said he was happy with the performance as it's the type of game he expects to experience in the finals series.

Postecoglou said he was also happy with his team's performance.

"I can't really complain. If they keep playing that way, I'll be happy. I cannot point to anything in particular that didn't work. It was just one of those games, and the 'keeper pulled off some very good saves."

He said he was not concerned with surrendering the number one spot on the Ericsson Cup table.

"It's more important how you're performing going into the finals.

"Northern Spirit is a good side with experience and quality. They're hard to beat, especially at home but they play attractive football."

When asked if he would be satisfied with a similar scoreline in a semi-final, Postecoglou said "I'm never happy when we lose, but I wouldn't be upset."

He also said that Goran Lozanovski and Con Blatsis should be back in time for the mid-week match against Perth Glory which was delayed due to the Grand Prix earlier this month.

In summary, the main difference between the sides was a rare goal keeping error from Petkovic in the 11th minute and some Henderson heroics.

Beyond that, it points to an exciting and tense finals series for players and fans alike.

KNIPE ATTACK HALTS COSMOS REVIVAL

BRISBANE STRIKERS 3
Knipe 26, 89, Meredith 72
CANBERRA COSMOS 1
De Jesus 90
At Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane

By Glenn Davis

A double from multi talented midfielder Wayne Knipe kept Brisbane Strikers faint Ericsson Cup hopes alive with a convincing 3-1 win over Canberra Cosmos at Suncorp Stadium on Saturday night.

The win put the former Ericsson Cup champions three points outside the top six in seventh place with four games remaining.

Brisbane, who need to overhaul either Adelaide City or Sydney Olympic to make the playoffs led 1-0 at the break after a dominating first half.

The Strikers had eight definite scoring chances before Knipe broke the deadlock in the 26th minute.

Knipe, playing his first game since being dropped by coach John Kosmina following the Newcastle clash in mid-January, grabbed with two hands his opportunity to impress again.

Knipe had earlier surprised the small crowd of 3,454 by singing the national anthem prior to kick off, registered his first goal of the season scoring from close range past Canberra keeper Vilson Knezevic.

Knipe, who came into the side for Sean Cranney, bagged his second goal in the 89th minute again from close range off a cross from Nick Meredith.

Although the crowd was smaller than expected, it was enough to give the Strikers the honour of registering the Ericsson Cup's one millionth spectator for the season.

The Strikers served notice from the opening whistle that they had not given up their slim finals hopes with several close calls in the first 20 minutes.

Canberra keeper Knezevic was called on in the first minute to tip a 20 metre shot from Strikers front man Stu McLaren wide of the upright.

Reece Tollenaere missed with a sitter scooping a shot over the crossbar in the 13th minute while teammates Kasey Wehrman and Jeromy Harris both were astray with gift chances.

Only desperate defence from the visitors prevented a Strikers whitewash in the first half.

The Strikers continued their dominance after the



Wayne Knipe ... sang the national anthem and scored two goals. Not a bad night's work!

MATCH STATS...

Crowd: 3,454

Referee: Matthew Breeze (Syd)

Brisbane Strikers: Bolton, Gwynne, Zoricich (Bell 90), Laybutt, Tollenaere (Harper 45), Wehrman, McLaren (Cranney 72), Knipe, Hews, Harris, Meredith.

Canberra Cosmos: Knezevic, Popovich, Zelic (Burt 78), Marcina, Magnacca (Musitano 60), Buljan, Roberts, Gonzalez, Purdue (Wingell 53), De Jesus, Hunter.

Yellows

Canberra Cosmos: Zelic 39, Purdue 83, Roberts 90, Musitano 80

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: Knipe (BS)

2: Meredith (BS)

1: De Jesus (CC)

break but had to wait until the 72nd minute before extending their lead to 2-0 when Meredith rifled a 20 metre angled shot which took a slight deflection off a Canberra defender into the net.

The only joy for Canberra came deep into time-on when midfielder Ivo De Jesus surged into the box in a solo run before beating keeper Clint Bolton with his shot.



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CITY DROP TWO VITAL POINTS

ADELAIDE CITY 0
GIPPSLAND FALCONS 0
At Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide

By Margaret Bowden and Donald Campbell

Who would have predicted a scoreless draw in this match? Even during the game the law of averages on shots on goal indicated Adelaide City would win, but Gippsland keeper Chris Ball had other ideas.

He was a Falcon in full flight, magnificently saving what looked to be two certain goals and stopping everything else.

While Ball was one of the busiest players on the park, City keeper Jason Petkovic must have been the coldest, especially in the first half. Even though the Falcons attacked through midfield for the full 90 minutes, led by an inspirational performance from 88.5 Coast FM Player of the Match Will Hastie, the few shots they managed to get on target rarely troubled Petkovic.

City's defence of Alex Tobin, Milan Ivanovic and Mark Yates, assisted by Bradley Hassell, Travis Dodd and Dongi Ki Kim, played superbly, dispossessing the Falcons before they had a chance to shoot.

In a sight rarely seen, Tobin was also a force in attack, spending much of the second half wide on the left, pumping long high balls into the penalty area for Dodd, Hassell and Mori to head at goal. Throughout the game, he and Yates ghosted into the penalty area for City corners, intent on heading a goal.

City could have been a goal up in the first minute

when Carl Veart knocked the ball forward for Damian Mori, whose speed beat the offside trap and took him into a one-on-one with Ball in the penalty area, but Mori shot well wide of the far post. This proved to be an omen for City, setting the scenario for an entire match of missed opportunities.

Louis Brain and Mori played some scintillating combinations, Dodd terrorised the Falcons defence with his speed and tricky footwork down the right wing.

Hassell dodged and weaved past the opposition, while Carlo Talladira and Tobin constantly sent in crosses from the left for Mori and Brain. In this first half, Ball saved headers from Mori, Yates and Brain, and dangerous low shots from Dodd and Veart, while Mori sent a free kick and a close range header over the bar.

Andy Vargas, Levent Osman, Hopkins and Hastie put in solid performances in defence, cutting out many more City attacks before a shot eventuated.

Clayton Bell caused some concern early for the City defence, as did Osman, but most of the Falcon attacks, resulting from slick passages of passing between Hastie, Brian MacNicol, Sandy Robertson and Osman, were cut out by Tobin and Ivanovic.

Ivanovic entertained the frustrated City supporters, uncharacteristically giving the ball away in midfield then repossessing it and playing with it as if it were attached to his boot. Gasps of horror turned to applause for the master as he sent his team into attack.

The Falcons came out for the second half intent on getting the three points. Stuart Munro had come for a win and his team were determined to give him one. MacNicol raced into the box in the first-minute but Yates' timely tackle prevented a shot.

Then Vargas smashed a shot just wide of the far post.

Dodd replied for City, speeding towards the penalty area, but Hastie dispossessed him and sent the Falcons back into attack.

Dodd had a chance to score from a Tobin cross, but Vargas cleared. Hassell then sent a high ball across the face of goal for the oncoming Mori, but Ball leapt high



Alex Tobin ... top striker!

to cut out the danger. Hastie then combined with MacNicol and Bell, finishing the move he started with a smashing shot which was blocked by Hassell.

Dodd then crossed low for Mori whose diving header flew just past the near post. Hastie and Vargas attacked for Gippsland from the goalkick, but City regained possession.

Brain bulletted a header onto the goal line from a Hawrysiuk cross — Ball saved again. And again from a Kim 20 metre rocket. This spurred Hastie, who played

MATCH STATS

Crowd: 4,926 official

Referee: Brett Hugo

Adelaide City: Petkovic, Yates, Ivanovic, Tobin, Talladira, Mori, Veart, Hassell, Dodd (Hawrysiuk 67), Kim (Menillo 82), Brain.

Gippsland Falcons: Ball, Gotis, Hopkins, Osman, MacNicol, Bell, Robertson (Mitroulas 85), Canosa, Perinovic (McDonald, 72), Vargas, Hastie.

Yellow

Gippsland: Hopkins 28

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: Will Hastie (Gippsland)
2: Alex Tobin (Adelaide City)
1: Bradley Hassell (Adelaide City)

like a man possessed for the final 20 minutes, taking on the entire City defence, then racing back to dispossess them in attack.

MacNicol sent a shot just over the bar after a Hastie build-up, then missed the Falcons' best scoring chance. He was clean through into the box with only Petkovic to beat when he slipped over.

No goals and plenty of frustration, especially for City. To their credit, they never vented their frustrations on the Falcons but concentrated on bagging that elusive goal. It was the Falcons who walked a fine line with referee Hugo. Claudio Canosa was lucky to escape a booking in the second minute when he hacked down speedy Travis Dodd.

Marko Perinovic received a couple of stern chats and Jeff Hopkins was cautioned for a crude tackle on Bradley Hassell.

GLORY BATTLE FOR DRAW

PERTH GLORY 2
Boutsianis 31, Halpin 90
UTS SYDNEY OLYMPIC 2
Tsekenis 64, Carle 84,
At Perth Oval, Perth

By Richard Kreider

Perth Glory threw away a golden opportunity to oust South Melbourne at the head of the Ericsson Cup standings after a thrilling 2-2 draw with Sydney Olympic at Perth Oval last Sunday.

Despite playing some of the best football ever seen at Perth Oval, especially in the first 45 minutes, the Glory boys failed to assert their authority on a well drilled Olympic side who were in fact only seconds away from victory before a superb free-kick goal by substitute Troy Halpin in the third minute of questionable stoppage time saved Glory from the jaws of defeat.

"We came here to get a draw, but to lose what

should have been a win is very disappointing," said Olympic coach Branko Culina who was clearly irate with the amount of time added on by referee Eugene Brazzale in the second-half.

"We played football full of fireworks in the opening half, but then were a different side after the interval" said Glory coach Bernd Stange. "We have the tallest defenders in the NSL, but they allowed the opposition to score headers against us. Thank goodness we have some good dead-ball specialists", said Stange who believed a draw was the right result.

Glory officials were pleasantly surprised with the 15,041 attendance, especially since the West Coast Eagles and Fremantle Dockers were playing their AFL derby clash a few kilometres down the road.

Olympic kicked-off towards the 'Hill' end of the ground and found themselves on the receiving end of some dazzling yet penetrating two-touch football.

In the 3rd minute, Scott Miller released a fierce drive that looked netbound until Sydney goalkeeper George Bouhoutsos made the first of many world-class saves. His most crucial came after 10 minutes when he lunged to his right to prevent Alistair Edwards from converting a penalty.

After a powerful Michael Garcia header struck the crossbar in the 23rd minute, Glory's persistence was finally rewarded eight minutes later when Con Boutsianis forced the ball over the line after his initial shot struck the underside of the crossbar.

A breathtaking Miller solo run two minutes later came close to increasing Glory's lead, but Bouhoutsos was again on hand to push away the danger.

With Bouhoutsos restricting the home side to just the single goal, Olympic were able claw their way back into the game.

After Norm Tome had a shot saved by Anthony Franken in the 50th minute, they finally broke through in the 64th minute when Peter Tsekenis ghosted in at the back post and dived full length to a Pablo Cardozo corner.

With Glory still shell-shocked, Olympic were presented with a handful of goal-scoring opportunities, especially in the 80th minute when an extraordinary sequence of shots sprayed all round Franken but never found the target.

Substitute Nick Carle showed them how it is done in the 84th minute when he headed home a Mark Brennan centre. With defeat staring the home side in the face, Halpin nipped in front of dead-ball master Boutsianis to sneak a surprise equaliser in the dying seconds of the game from a 20 metre free-kick.

With people still streaming out of the turnstiles,

MATCH STATS...

Crowd: 15,041

Referee: Eugene Brazzale

Perth Glory: Franken, Trajkovski, Wilkinson, Miller, Strudwick (Halpin 69), Despotovski (Kalogeracos), Garcia, Bousianis, Hay, Deans, Edwards.

UTS Sydney Olympic: Bouhoutsos, Thomas, Tsekenis, Tome (Brennan), Cardozo, Kalantzis (Carle 68), Juric, Baillie, Durakovic, Zorbas (Jonas 35), Blagojevic.

Yellows

Sydney Olympic: S. Thomas, P. Tsekenis

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: S Miller (PG)
2: G. Bouhoutsos (SO)
1: S. Thomas (SO)

Stange sent his entire squad back on the pitch to do some light training in preparation for Wednesday's tough encounter with South Melbourne.

FOR WHOM THE BELTRAME TOLLS?

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 2
Horsley 30, Quennet 90
ADELAIDE SHARKS 0
At Brandon Park, Wollongong

By Soccer Weekly

Young goalkeeper Daniel Beltrame was the saviour of Wollongong Wolves in the 2-0 victory over the Sharks at Brandon Park in front of 3,100 on Sunday.

The Sharks dominated play, with a massive number

of shots on goal, but the rookie custodian was superb in keeping a clean sheet and helping the Wolves to a second win on the trot (the first time it has been achieved this season).

Wolves skipper Matt Horsley scored in 30th minute and the victory only was sealed three minutes into injury time through new signing Tahitian international Gerald Quennet, who had missed a sitter just moments earlier.

But in a busy game for both keepers Beltrame, in only his second senior game, made three brilliant saves. Twice he denied Sharks striker Alex Duric with one-on-one saves, as well as a long range effort from Sharks defender Alex Castro in the 20th minute.

Young Joel Porter, who made the step up to NSL from state league this year, should have earned the visitors the goal that would have got them a deserved draw but lifted his shot over the bar in the final minute.

Incredibly, card happy referee Con Diomis did not flourish a yellow card till just three minutes from time, which must be a record!

Wolves skipper Matt Horsley, in a buoyant mood after the game said of Beltrame: "He has a big future at 21. His concentration is good and gives the team confidence. He has only just come into the side but is definitely showing promise."

As for the game the Wolves skipper was adamant that chances converted win matches, something Wollongong has not always done this season: "We won it because we scored early, but we did not put the chances away like we should have, but we still won thankfully."

"The players have just want to finish the season

MATCH STATS...

Crowd: 3,100

Referee: C Diomis

TEAM LINE-UP N/A

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: Beltrame (WC)
2: Horsley (WC)
1: Porter (AS)

well. Tony Perinich was a big loss but I guess a lack of consistency has been our problem this year, plus losing Kosta (Salapadidis) and Alvin (Ceccoli) to Europe was a detrimental. We are playing on Sunday at Newcastle, which is always a difficult game."



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BREAKERS' HOPES SINK IN MUD

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 1
Susa 24
NEWCASTLE BREAKERS 0
At Knights Stadium, Melbourne

By Patrick Tomson

Cold, wet and blustery winds prevailed with Melbourne Knights finishing with a well deserved 1-0 victory against Newcastle Breakers.

The difficult conditions at Knights Stadium on Sunday prevented a free flowing game, however the Knights proved to be the better of the two sides to adapt to the elements. After a deflected shot on goal by Zeljko Susa found the back of the net, the Knights played a more disciplined game and were able to subdue the Breakers' attacking play.

According to Newcastle's coach Lee Sterrey, the lack of adaptability of his side to the conditions proved to be his side's demise. "My players aren't used to these breezy, sloppy, muddy type conditions. They couldn't stand on their feet the whole first half."

"We had more players on their backsides in the first half than what we had on our feet. Football wise, we didn't handle the conditions very well at all and we can play much better than that. We ended up getting punished by the one mistake."

Melbourne were without injured keeper Joey Didulica and suspended Kovacevic, however, the Knights were pleased to see the return of Ransford Banini from injury in the starting 11.

Newcastle on the other hand came into the game with an impressive record, losing only 2 of their last 13 games. With their eyes firmly entrenched on making the top six, the defeat heightens the importance of gaining favourable results from their remaining matches.

"It makes it very difficult now," says coach Lee

Sterrey. "With three hard road trips and two games at home, we need to win four of our last five games to get into the finals."

Playing into a strong gale in the first half, Newcastle were set to absorb most of the Knights pressure. The first yellow was shown to the Breakers' Glenn Sprod for a rash challenge in the opening minutes of play.

Melbourne Knights were first to hit the target, after a 14th minute corner was met by Joe Rajher with his resultant header cleared superbly off the line by Newcastle's Mark Wilson.

With the stiff breeze behind them, the Knights let fly with several long range shots. Attempts by Jolic, Banini and Reda were all struck firmly and narrowly missed the target.

It was again a long range strike that led to the Knights winning goal. In the 24th minute, Zeljko Susa was given some space in their attacking midfield and drove his shot from 30 meters out.

A deflection from Newcastle's Adam Sanderson left keeper Bob Catlin clutching at air as he watched the ball sail over his body to hit the top crossbar and rebound into the net.

The game's stand out player Susa was in the thick of things again, this time combining well with the Knights Ivan Kelic. Susa's final drive was hit firmly however the low shot flew past the wrong side of the upright.

The few times Newcastle were able to penetrate the Knights' defence, mediocre finishing spoiled the Breakers lead up play. Breakers' forward John Buonavoglia worked tirelessly up front and should have been rewarded in the 38th minute.

A delightful return pass from Greg Owen left Buonavoglia on the edge of the 18 yard box, however his poor shot merely dribbled well wide of the target, capping off a disappointing half for the Breakers.

With the Knights playing into the breeze in the second half, it was surprising that Melbourne created the first scoring opportunity. Ivan Kelic's cut back found Susa in the 18 yard box. With several defenders at his

heels he did well to keep the ball at his feet, though his shot narrowly missed the goals.

Newcastle's best opportunity to score came in the 48th minute from a Glenn Sprod corner. The left footer intelligently used the breeze to swing in a wickedly curling cross from the corner spot.

Knight's keeper, Martin John, came confidently for the cross however, he found himself having to back-track from the curl and managed a diving tip onto the cross bar. With no one to sweep in the crumbs for the Breakers, the Knights were able to clear the ball to safety.

"Our intensity and alertness was not there. The ball has come down from the cross bar with the goal-keeper totally beaten, and we haven't got a player in sight around the six yard box hungry enough to be on the end of something," stipulated Breakers' coach, Sterrey.

Newcastle were presented with another chance shortly after, with a Robert Shannon cross finding and unmarked Thomas Haythornthwaite at the far post. He met the cross well, however his header was directed straight at the Knights' custodian.

With the Breakers failing to consolidate an equaliser, Melbourne had the opportunity to finish the game off in the 70th minute. A superb ball from Ante Deak found Ivan Kelic in the 18 yard box with only the keeper to beat.

Controlling the ball early, Kelic's side footer beat the keeper destined for the back of the net, had it not been for the upright. His shot rebounded from the post and was eventually cleared by Shane Pryce.

Knight's new signing Lance Plunkett came off the bench in his NSL debut and almost managed to put himself on the score card, spoiled by the outstretched arm of Newcastle Keeper Bob Catlin.

Knight's coach Joe Biskic was pleased with his side's performance though still aiming for his side to win two in a row. "To get two wins in a row would make it much easier for us. It was a hard match for us and I'm really pleased we won, considering Newcastle has had good

MATCH STATS...

Crowd: 1,400 (est)

Referee: Gerry Connolly

Melbourne Knights: John, Nastevski, Jolic, Kelic, Rajher, Kiratzoglou, Susa, Deak (Magdic 80), Reda, Kutlesovski (Collina 67), Banini (Plunkett 87).

Newcastle Breakers: Catlin, Pryce, Roberts, Sanderson, Sprod (Tanchevski 83), Ritchie, Wilson, Buonavoglia, Owens (Yoon 58), Shannon, Haythornthwaite (Maguire 72).

Yellows

Breakers: Sprod 4, Haythornthwaite 34, Ritchie 45.

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: Zeljko Susa (MK)

2: Joe Rajher (MK)

1: Michael Reda (MK)

results coming into the match.

We knocked the ball around and kept possession and we were patient. After the goal, we created more chances to score and we were tight at the back and played a disciplined game. We are looking to finish the league on a positive note."

Obviously disappointed with his side's performance, Newcastle coach Lee Sterrey still believes they have a chance of making the final series.

"Our football content, playing into the wind in the first half, was garbage and we have to play much better with the ball. It's disappointing that we didn't

handle the conditions well, and we didn't play one of our better games.

"In saying that, all credit to the Knights for their performance. Though with four wins out of our next five, we are still in there for the hunt, and we are certainly not going to give up here."



GIBSON SPECIAL IGNITES DOUR CLASH

CARLTON SC 1
Thompson 71
MARCONI FAIRFIELD 2
Gibson 74, Maloney 86
At Olympic Park, Melbourne

By Ralph Barba

An out of tune Marconi kept their finals chances alive with an unconvincing 2-1 win over fellow finals aspirant, Carlton at Olympic Park on Sunday night.

It needed a curling Brad Maloney free kick at the death to finally put paid to the plucky Carlton, who in recent weeks have been decimated by injury, suspension and the absence of star players through international duty.

"Our problem is that we have had to perform miracles without possessing a strong bench. It's very disappointing to accept but it's the end of our season" lamented disappointed Carlton coach, Eddie Krncevic.

A tentative opening stanza confirmed a meeting of two teams that had lost their way in recent weeks. Marconi in particular, lacked composure when in possession and cohesion when defending.

Carlton striker, Archie Thompson seemed to be the only attacking player on the park with any purpose and direction to his play. He continuously provided the link between the Sean Douglas led 'Blues' defence



Brad Maloney ... a cracking game from a cracking midfielder.

and a home team attacking line, devoid of any real penetration.

The out of sorts Carlton Latin goal ace, Alex Moreira was being propped up by the inexperienced, Tony Ouliaris and impressive young fullback, David Grbac.

But Carlton's inability to punish a visiting team lacking in imagination, ambition and confidence throughout their uncertain opening 45 minutes was destined to come back and haunt them as the

game wore on.

The second half commenced with Stallion's tireless captain, Brad Maloney and awkward striker, Francis Awaritife attempting to ignite the visiting team with mobile and incisive play.

The 'Blues' retaliated with some damaging rebound play involving the hard running Martin and the dangerous Thompson.

It was one such raid that finally paid dividends in the 72nd minute. Thompson again provided the link and found Moriera with an outlet pass.

Tentative defending by Longo and Smith allowed the Carlton striker to unleash a run and shot that could only be parried by Marconi keeper, Covic into the path of Thompson, who slotted the ball home after following up his good play.

The home team's joy was short lived however. A Chad Gibson pile-driver, from 30 metres in the 74th minute, doing the damage and throwing a lifeline to the desperate Stallions.

At 1-1 the game exploded into an end to end contest.

Carlton's Anastasiadis, produced a reflex save to deny Maloney in the 76th minute. 'Blues' substitute, Nick Tolios launched into a strike that unluckily went wide of the target in the 80th minute, and the hapless Moreira, failed to snatch the winner for Carlton in the 83rd minute after a measured cutback by David

MATCH STATISTICS:

Crowd: 1,831 (Official)

Referee: Eddie Lennie

Yellows:

Carlton: S. Douglas, M. Stergiopoulos
Marconi: M. Smith, D. Longo

Carlton SC: Anastasiadis, Anthopoulos, Stergiopoulos, Douglas, Marth, Moreira, Thompson, Grbac (Tolios 75), Ouliaris (Stojovski 78), Martin (Della Rocca 90).

Marconi Fairfield: Covic, Gibson, Babic, Longo, McDonald (B. Renuad 73), Maloney, Smith, Farrah, Awaritife (Farina 90), Trajanovski (Babic 67), Hooker.

Votes Player of the Year:

3: Maloney (Marconi)

2: Douglas (Carlton)

1: Thompson (Carlton)

Cervinski.

It was in the 86th minute when the visitors finally exacted revenge for their narrow preliminary final loss on the same ground against Carlton last season. Captain courageous, Maloney punished Carlton with a set piece to make the end result 2-1 and effectively condemn the 'Blues' to a rebuilding program for next season.

A relieved Marconi coach, Frank Farina, was thankful after the game. "I was happy with the result.

We are still alive that's what matters".



National Youth League

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SOUTHERN DIVISION

Round 26

Bulleen Inter1	South Melbourne0
VIS1	Gippsland Falcons1
Carlton	.....5	Melbourne Knights	.....4

Bye v Albury Wodonga

League Ladder

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Carlton	20	14	3	3	58	24	45
South Melbourne	20	11	3	6	33	20	36
Melbourne Knights	21	9	3	9	44	42	30
VIS	17	8	5	4	33	27	29
Gippsland Falcons	19	7	3	9	32	31	24
Bulleen Inter Kings	18	7	2	9	25	33	23
Albury Wodonga	19	1	1	17	18	66	4

ROUND 25

Wednesday 31 March

South Melbourne v VIS,
(Bob Jane Stadium, 5 pm)

ROUND 27

Thursday 1 April

Bulleen Interv Carlton,
(Veneto Park, 7 pm)

Saturday 3 April

VIS v Albury Wodonga,
(Grange Reserve, 3.30 pm)

LEADING SOUTHERN SCORERS

Andrew Mashoian	South Melb	15
Scott McDonald	VIS	7
Tony Ouliaris	Carlton	7
Erhan Bayraktar	South Melb	7

Sunday 4 April

Gippsland Falcons v Melbourne Knights,
(Mobil Park, 3.30 pm)
South Melbourne v Bye

Southern Summary ... Bulleen Inter kicked off Round 26 with a one-nil win over South Melbourne at the Veneto Club on Thursday night. The game was notable for four dismissals, two per side, though it was not a spiteful match. The only goal was scored by Michael Gulino.

The VIS and Gippsland Falcons drew one-all at Grange Reserve. Angelo Moutsipoulos scored for the VIS in 45 minutes and Alex Halikias equalised late on for Gippsland.

The VIS is off to Johor in Malaysia for a four-match tour on Sunday 4 April.

League leader Carlton had to come from behind to beat the Melbourne Knights by five goals to four on Sunday in a thriller at Olympic Park.

The Knights led two-nil through Robert Senes, his second goal in successive matches, and Frank Bazzano. But two goals by Deniz Ekici and singles to Daniel Debevc, Serdar Pir and Issy Erdogan put Carlton ahead only for late goals by Adis Kablar and Chris Tabak to bring the Knights back into contention. Carlton just held on to win.

Northern Summary ... Marconi Fairfield Colts beat Sydney United Colts by three goals to nil last Wednesday in a Round 16 catch-up game.

Northern Spirit downed Sydney Olympic Academy by five goals to nil in Round 26. Gabriel Mendez scored a hat-trick beginning in the third minute and following up with his second in 13 minutes. Adam Griffiths after 22 and Daniel Watkins in 23 minutes were the other scorers and Mendez completed his hat-trick with two minutes left to play.

QAS beat ACTAS by the same score. This time the goals were spread among five players with Ian Bonato opening the scoring on the half-hour, quickly followed by goals to Damier Volker in 35 minutes and Shaun

Welsh in 37 minutes. Andrew Davidson made it four with ten minutes to go and Owen Filewood scored his goal as the game went into its last minute.

Sydney Olympic had an extra-ordinary six-four win over Sydney United Colts. Monte Prfengle, Frank Iorfino, Luke Boyd and S. Easthope scored for the Colts, while Jim Bakis scored a quick hat-trick for Olympic. The speedy Joe Corrente, looking like a younger Ernie Tapai, and even faster according to his coach, scored, as did Leo Carle and Adrian Totaro to give Olympic victory.

In the table-top clash the AIS just beat Marconi Fairfield by a goal to nil. Jade North came on as substitute for the AIS and scored the only goal in the 80th minute.

Ivan Ergic also showed up well. Marconi keeper David Aseski was the star for his side with a string of fine saves.

On Sunday Wollongong Wolves ran in thirteen goals against its Colts side.

Northern Spirit Colts had a good two-one away win over Marconi Fairfield Colts. Ian Church put the Spirit ahead in 32 minutes, and Lee Gunn equalised for Marconi in 65 minutes.

Todd Macrae scored the winner from the penalty spot in 81 minutes.

Newcastle Breakers completed the round with a two-one away win over the NSW Institute of Sport. The first half was very even, with Chad Mansley scoring a well-taken goal for the Breakers in 24 minutes only for Tallan Martin to reply nine minutes later. The Institute was on the attack, having a free kick on the edge of the Breakers' penalty area.

The shot reached the keeper who got it forward quickly for Mansley to hold off the defence and score his and the Breakers second and match-winning goal.

NORTHERN DIVISION

Round 16

Wednesday 24 March

Sydney United Colts0	Marconi Fairfield3
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Round 26

Saturday 27 March

Northern Spirit5	Sydney Olympic Academy0
QAS5	ACTAS0
Sydney United Colts	.....4	Sydney Olympic	.....6
AIS	.....1	Marconi Fairfield	.....0

Sunday 28 March

Wollongong Wolves	.....13	Wollongong Wolves Colts	.....0
Marconi Fairfield Colts	.....1	Northern Spirit Colts	.....2
NSWIS	.....1	Newcastle Breakers	.....2

Sydney United v Bye

League Ladder

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AIS	25	18	6	1	87	15	60
Sydney Olympic	24	18	2	4	80	24	56
Marconi Fairfield	23	15	5	3	70	16	50
Newcastle Breakers	24	15	5	4	55	25	50
Northern Spirit	24	16	2	6	51	21	50
NSWIS	24	15	3	6	62	25	48
Wollongong Wolves	24	15	2	7	74	27	47
QAS	23	13	1	9	64	38	40
Sydney United	24	8	4	12	42	42	28
Marconi Fairfield Colts	23	6	4	13	25	42	22
ACTAS	24	4	3	17	30	69	15
Northern Spirit Colts	24	4	3	17	22	90	15
Sydney United Colts	24	4	1	19	26	77	13
Sydney Olympic Academy	24	3	4	17	21	92	13
Wollongong Wolves Colts	24	1	3	20	15	12	6

ROUND 27

Friday 2 April

Newcastle Breakers v Wollongong Wolves,
(Breakers Stadium, 5.45 pm)

Saturday 3 April

Marconi Fairfield v NSWIS,
(Marconi Stadium, 5 pm)

Northern Spirit Colts v Northern Spirit,
(Christie Park, 4 pm)

Wollongong Wolves Colts v Marconi Fairfield Colts,
(Brandon Park No 2, 4 pm)

Sydney United Colts v ACTAS,
(Edensor Park, 3 pm)

Sunday 4 April

Sydney Olympic Academy v QAS,
(Wentworth Park, 4 pm)

Sydney Olympic v AIS,
(Belmore Sports Ground, 4 pm)

Marconi Fairfield Colts v Northern Spirit Colts,
(Marconi Stadium, 5 pm)

Monday 5 April

ACTAS v Sydney United,
(Bruce Stadium, 5 pm)
Sydney United Colts v Bye

LEADING NORTHERN SCORERS

Mark Haggar	Marconi	20
Kevo Gulesserian	AIS	18
Simon Catanzaro	NSWIS	18
Daniel Kukucka	Sydney United	14
Elias Demourtzidis	AIS	13
Russell Miner	QAS	11

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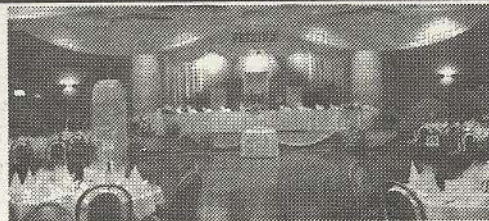
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NSW SUPER LEAGUE

GOALS GALORE!

This weekend's NSW Super League soccer competition enjoyed a glut of goals as the competition hots up into its eighth week.

Bankstown skipped away to a 4-0 win at Gosford when they beat Central Coast, after leading 2-0 at half-time.

Blacktown came from behind to beat Bonnyrigg 4-2 at Gabbie Stadium.

Sutherland and equal leaders, the Fairfield Bulls, each scored a goal in their drawn match.

Macarthur took advantage of Parramatta, when it was reduced to ten men, by defeating them 1-0 at Lynwood Park.

Eastern Suburbs had their first win of the season against Canterbury when they defeated them 3-1, thanks to the inspirational return of Latvian international, Vadim Mikoutski.

Leichhardt edged out Ryde City, 1-0 with a stunning goal from the Super League sensation of the season to date, Chris Lansdown.

Eastern Suburbs 3 Canterbury-M/ville 1

By Ben Cubby



Eastern Suburbs finally broke through for their first win of the season, defeating a lacklustre Canterbury-Marrickville side 3-1 at Wentworth Park on Sunday afternoon.

East showed greater commitment throughout the match. The former Latvian international drilled a 25 metre free kick through the Berries wall and into the net, delighting the loyal home supporters.

Canterbury had seemed to be clawing their way back into the game when East struck again on the stroke of half time. Naoki Imai took advantage of some poor marking in

the box to chest down a cross and roll it delicately past the stranded Tolios.

Two minutes after the break, the Wanderers went further in front. Imai found space on the left and saw his cross trickle just inside the far post. A Canterbury defender appeared to get the last touch, but Imai was more than happy to claim his team's third goal. East continued to push forward, with Yavos Ekinci and the gritty Steve McCombe testing Tolios from long range.

Canterbury began to assert themselves more in midfield, but it was too little, too late. Mal Nicholls, Mikoutski and former under-21 skipper Pat Darvill continually caught the Berries forward line in a polished offside trap.

Substitute Zoran Ilic scored a consolation goal for Canterbury in the 85th minute, after a skilful interchange between Jane Talceviski and Jim Nikas, but by then the game was well beyond their reach.

Steve Christoforidis and Steve Tolios were the best of a lethargic outfit, along with tenacious young midfielder Talceviski.

Vadim Mikoutski had a superb match for Eastern Suburbs, his probing runs from defence setting up a number of chances. Naoki Imai showed some deft touches in midfield and Manny Mitakidis looked sharp up front.

East coach John Calleja was "ecstatic" after the match, saying "the players stuck to the game plan today and kept it simple, plus we performed consistently for the full ninety minutes." he thought that every player on the park had worked hard, and said that team spirit had played a big part in the victory.

Eastern Suburbs: Anastasiadis, Pulicino, Darvill, Lawrence (Chahine 80), Canning (Sevares 26), Ekinci, Imai (Orhan 82), McCombe, Mitakidis, Nicholls, Mikoutski.

Canterbury: Tolios, Raeburn, Palapanis, Mendes (Ilic 45), Percy, Talceviski, Bosevski, Nikas, Christoforidis, Markopoulos, Raeburn (Molachino 27).

NSW SOCCER FEDERATION SUPER LEAGUE

ROUND NINE



ROUND TEN

Friday 2 April

Bonnyrigg White Eagles v
Leichhardt Tigers
Serbian Centre, 6:00pm
Bankstown City Lions v
Blacktown City Demons
Jensen Park, 3:00pm
Fairfield Bulls v Central Coast
Nineveh Field, 3:00pm
Eastern Suburbs v
Macarthur Rams
Wentworth Park, 3:00pm
Saturday 3 April
Parramatta Eagles v
Sutherland Sharks
Melita Stadium, 5:00pm

Sunday 4 April

Macarthur Rams v C'bury M'ville
Lynwood Park, 7:00pm
Bonnyrigg WE v Ryde City
Serbian Centre, 3:00pm
L'hardt Tigers v B'stown City Lions
Lambert Park, 3:00pm
Blacktown City Demons v
Fairfield Bulls
Gabbie Stadium, 6:00pm
Monday 5 April
Central Coast v
Parramatta Eagles
Plum Park, 3:00pm
Sutherland Sharks v Eastern Subs
Seymour Shaw Field, 3:00pm

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SUPER LEAGUE

ROUND 8

Central Coast vs Bankstown	0-4
Blacktown vs Bonnyrigg	4-2
Sutherland vs Fairfield	1-1
Macarthur vs Parramatta	1-0
Eastern Subs vs Canterbury	3-1
Leichhardt vs Ryde	1-0

FIRST GRADE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Macarthur Rams	8	6	1	1	17	9	8	19
Fairfield Bulls	8	5	2	1	16	11	5	17
Blacktown C Demons	8	5	1	2	16	8	8	16
Bankstown City Lions	8	5	0	3	21	13	8	15
Bonnyrigg WE	8	4	1	3	19	16	3	13
Leichhardt Tigers	8	4	1	3	13	10	3	13
C'bury Marrickville	8	3	2	3	15	12	3	11
Parramatta Eagles	8	3	1	4	10	9	1	10
Central Coast	8	2	1	5	8	18	-10	7
Ryde City	8	1	3	4	10	14	-4	6
Sutherland Sharks	8	1	2	5	9	20	-11	5
Eastern Suburbs	8	1	1	6	9	23	-14	4

UNDER 21

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Parramatta Eagles	8	5	2	1	19	11	8	17
Bonnyrigg WE	8	5	0	3	13	7	6	15
Central Coast	8	4	2	2	13	13	0	14
Macarthur Rams	8	4	1	3	16	12	4	13
Canterbury Marrickville	8	4	1	3	13	9	4	13
Fairfield Bulls	8	4	1	3	11	13	-2	13
Eastern Suburbs	8	4	0	4	11	11	0	12
Ryde City	8	3	1	4	17	14	3	10
Blacktown C Demons	8	3	1	4	16	15	1	10
Sutherland Sharks	8	3	1	4	10	15	-5	10
Leichhardt Tigers	8	2	1	5	12	21	-9	7
Bankstown City Lions	8	1	1	6	8	18	-10	4

UNDER 18

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Parramatta Eagles	8	5	1	2	31	8	23	16
Blacktown C Demons	8	4	3	1	17	8	9	15
Canterbury Marrickville	8	4	3	1	15	10	5	15
Macarthur Rams	8	5	0	3	11	13	-2	15
Eastern Suburbs	8	4	2	2	14	9	5	14
Leichhardt Tigers	8	4	2	2	7	6	1	14
Bankstown City Lions	8	4	0	4	15	18	-3	12
Central Coast	8	3	1	4	12	12	0	10
Ryde City	8	2	1	5	7	12	-5	7
Sutherland Sharks	8	1	3	4	6	13	-7	6
Bonnyrigg WE	8	1	2	5	5	16	-11	5
Fairfield Bulls	8	1	2	5	7	22	-15	5

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE

ROUND 4

	G/13	G/14	G/15	G/16
Macarthur Rams v L'hardt Tigers	0-5	1-3	1-1	0-3
Sydney Utd v Gladesville Hornsby	1-1	2-3	1-1	3-2
P'matta Eagles v W'gong Wolves	1-1	1-4	1-1	2-0
Southern Dist v Eastern Subs	1-1	2-1	3-0	5-2
Newcastle Breakers v Marconi F	1-0	1-3	0-5	3-1
Central Coast v Sutherland Sharks	0-1	1-2	1-1	1-4
Southern Dist. v Manly Warr	4-3	2-1	1-3	1-4
Sydney Olympic v Blacktown City	1-5	0-2	1-3	3-0

COMBINED YOUTH LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Southern Districts	16	12	2	2	42	18	24	38
Blacktown C Demons	16	12	0	4	52	11	41	36
Newcastle Breakers	16	11	0	5	32	22	10	33
Marconi Fairfield	16	10	1	5	38	22	16	31
Wollongong Wolves	16	9	4	3	31	19	12	31
Sydney Olympic	16	9	1	6	45	22	23	28
Leichhardt Tigers	16	9	1	6	28	17	11	28
Sydney United	16	8	2	6	29	25	4	26

Gladesville Horn Ass	16	7	4	5	31	25	6	25
P'matta Eagles	16	6	4	6	33	25	8	22
Sutherland Sharks	16	5	4	7	18	2	-4	19
Southern Branch	16	4	1	11	18	54	-36	13
Many Warr Dolphins	16	4	0	12	20	42	-22	12
Eastern Suburbs	16	3	2	11	14	48	-34	11
Macarthur Rams	16	1	5	10	11	31	-20	8
Central Coast	16	2	1	13	12	51	-39	7

DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
AC United	12	9	2	1	32	13	19	29
Illawarra Lions	12	9	1	2	45	15	30	28
Ryde City	12	9	0	3	33	9	24	27
St George	12	8	2	2	32	10	22	26
Bankstown Ass	12	8	1	3	31	14	17	25
Blacktown Ass	12	7	2	3	22	11	11	23
Bonnyrigg WE	12	6	3	3	22	13	9	21
Hills United	12	4	2	6	16	18	-2	14
Fairfield Bulls	12	4	2	6	14	39	-25	14
Penrith Panthers	12	3	4	5	14	17	-3	13
Canterbury Assoc	12	3	0	9	18	24	-6	9
Rockdale City Suns	12	2	1	9	9	28	-19	7
Stanmore Hawks	12	2	0	10	13	33	-20	6
Canterbury M'ville	12	0	0	12	3	60	-57	0

DIVISION TWO

ROUND 2

	G/13	G/14	G/15	G/16
Granville Assoc v Nepean Assoc	0-3	2-1	1-4	1-3
Parramatta City v Macq Sports	0-4	1-2	2-0	3-5
Mt Pritchard v CSI Schofields	3-0	1-1	5-1	5-1
Camden Tigers v Ku-ring-gai Assoc	1-1	1-2	1-0	3-1
Hawkesbury City v Hajduk Wand	3-3	1-3	0-3	0-2
M'bank Sports v Mt Pritchard	1-7	0-4	0-0	1-7

DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Nepean Assoc	8	7	0	1	24	5	19	21
Mt Pritchard	8	6	1	1	23	7	16	19

Hajduk Wanderers	8	5	2	1	15	10	5	17
Mt Pritchard	8	4	2	2	20	10	10	14
Parramatta City	8	4	0	4	25	19	6	12
Camden Tigers	8	3	2	3	12	8	4	11
Ku-ring-gai Assoc	8	3	2	3	11	12	-1	11
Macquarie Sports	8	3	0	5	12	19	-7	9
Granville Assoc	8	3	0	5	13	23	-10	9
CSI Schofields	8	2	1	5	15	23	-8	7
Hawkesbury City	8	1	1	6	9	16	-7	4
Moorebank Sports	8	1	1	6	10	37	-27	4

GRADE 13

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Mt Pritchard	2	2	0	0	8	1	7	6
Nepean Association	2	2	0	0	7	1	6	6
Ku-ring-gai Ass	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	4
Mt Pritchard	2	1	0	1	3	1	2	3
Macquarie Sports	2	1	0	1	5	4	1	3
Moorebank Sports	2	1	0	1	5	7	-2	3
Granville Ass	2	1	0	1	4	6	-2	3
Hajduk Wanderers	2	0	2	0	5	5	0	2
Camden Tigers	2	0	2	0	3	3	0	2
Hawkesbury City	2	0	1	1	3	4	-1	1
CSI Schofields	2	0	0	2	3	7	-4	0
Parramatta City	2	0	0	2	0	8	-8	0

GRADE 14

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Hajduk Wanderers	2	2	0	0	4	1	3	6
CSI Schofields	2	1	1	0	4	2	2	4
Ku-ring-gai Ass	2	1	1	0	4	3	1	4
Parramatta City	2	1	0	1	7	5	2	3
Hawkesbury City	2	1	0	1	5	3	2	3
Nepean Association	2	1	0	1	3	2	1	3
Mt Pritchard	2	1	0	1	4	4	0	3
Granville Association	2	1	0	1	3	4	-1	3
Macquarie Sports	2	1	0	1	2	3	-1	3
Mt Pritchard	2	0	2	0	3	3	0	2
Camden Tigers	2	0	0	2	1	3	-2	0
Moorebank Sports	2	0	0	2	3	10	-7	0

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PREMIER LEAGUE



TOTALLY MAGIC

DANDY FOLD IN EYE OF ALTONA STORM

ALTONA MAGIC 5 SOUTH DANDENONG 1

By Ivan Perkov

The rise — not demise — of Altona Magic continued on Saturday, when the Magic were true to their nickname. Altona were deadly in front of goal, defeating an insecure South Dandenong 5-1.

It could have been different; the first 24 minutes were completely dominated by South Dandenong. Carlo Villani, Reshat Mezensof and co. attacked at will, but all that changed in the 25th minute when a slip by Valiant Mucaj allowed work-horse Henry Velkovski to steal in and neatly place the ball in the net to make it 1-0.

After the first goal fell Altona began to find its stride. Zoran Todorovski and John Sapazovski led from the front and player/coach Zoran trajceski, along with Macedonian import, Toni Trifunov, took control of midfield.

In particular Trifunov and Todorovski showed good touch when attacking the opposition, it was sign of things to come.

The second half continued where the first left off with Altona dictating the play. The Magic were sharper than their opponents, with each attack Altona were getting closer to killing off the game, and they did.

In the 70th minute, Sapazovski's corner found the head of Velkovski who flicked it over a stack of players into the path of an on-rushing Tom Markovski, sliding in to make it 2-0.

From there the Magic asserted their dominance. A Trifunov pass out wide to Marjan Tasevski in the 75th allowed the wing-back to run and cross for an unmarked Todorovski to half volley home.

An Altona counter-attack, started and finished by Trifunov, meant as a contest it was over. Tasevski, once again, delivered a curling cross to an anxious Trifunov, his head did the rest; 4-0.

A Sapazovski shot and goal in the 86th had some fans South running to their cars, hurrying home to forget about the game.

The consolation goal for Fadil Muriqi's team came in the 90th minute when a thunderbolt shot by Mezens almost tore a hole in the net. South Dandenong showed some moments in attack but a convincing 'Magic' display gave the home crowd something to cheer about.

Magic: McGrath, Tasevski, Risteovski, Micevski (Bogdanovski), Markovski, Vasilevski (Bizimovski), Trajceski (Madarovski), Todorovski, Sapazovski, Velkovski, Trifunov.

South: Roche, Lumanovski (Rasimi), Runje, Gupinar, Moodie (Muriqi), V.Memeti, Pelja, Van Egmond, Villani, Mezensof, Mucaj (M.Memeti).

Referee: Robert Ince

Votes: 3- Trifunov (AM), 2- Velkovski (AM), 1- Todorovski (AM)

PRESTON LIONS 2 ALTONA EAST 1

By John Rigas

Preston Lions moved into second spot on the table with a 2-1 victory over Altona East at Goodyear Stadium on Sunday.

It was Preston's third win on the trot and, after a up and down beginning to the season, they are starting to find form and continued with it with a win over a determined Phoenix side.

In a game of many chances, Steven Bartol of Altona East came closest first when he had a long range effort palmed over the bar by Preston 'keeper Lupce Acevski.

Former Soccerroo striker Warren Spink went even nearer just before half time when his volley struck the

underside of the bar, the ball rebounding to him, but he could only head into the arms of Sam Frangos.

Spink had a close range shot that went over the bar in the 52nd minute but shortly after that Preston hit the front.

Tony Ujgunovski broke the deadlock in the 61st minute, finding the net from an acute angle through a packed penalty area.

The Phoenix hit back however, and were level within a minute when George Angelos beat Acevski to a Paul Donnelly cross, rounded him and scored.

The hosts were back in front moments later when Chris Emovski converted from the penalty spot after referee Alan Contini had spotted a handball in the area.

Lions: Acevski, Slavevski, Kovacic, Lisolajski, Ogenovski, Simsek, Kozic, Ujgunovski (Smirnis), Filipovski, Emovski, Spink.

Phoenix: Frangos, R.Antoniadis, Kapulica, Salpingidis, Dimitrelos, De Amicis (Petrovski), L.Catalano (F.Catalano), Donnelly, Bartol, Papadopoulos, Angelos.

Referee: Alan Contini

Votes: 3- Frangos (AE), 2- Emovski (PL), 1- Slavevski (PL)

SPRINGVALE WE 3 MELBOURNE RAIDERS 0

By Chris Elysee

Springvale White Eagles tunned a lacklustre Melbourne Raiders outfit at the Serbian Sports Centre with a clinical brand of attacking football, winning 3-0.

Although Springvale was ravaged by injury and a coaching departure, they put in what may be their best effort of the year, led superbly by their captain Zlatko Mihajlovic.

Springvale started the game full of running, with the exception of a first minute attack by the Raiders which was deemed to be offside. Their reward for an explosive start came in the fourth minute, with a fumble from a Jimmy Gacovski free kick by Raiders 'keeper Robert Manzella allowing Mihajlovic to score from a goal mouth scramble.

From here it was all Springvale, creating numerous opportunities through the tireless work of Eric Styczen down the left hand side and the deceptive Sasa Nikolic through the middle.

Mihajlovic went close with a free kick that rocketed into the crossbar while the only real threat to the White Eagles' goal came when Borislav Simic was forced into a spectacular double save, keeping George Slifkas and Lirim Salievski at bay.

The pattern continued in the second half, with a piece of Mihajlovic magic putting the White Eagles two up. After stealing the ball from Zoran Kitanovski, Mihajlovic shot from the edge of the box on the right hand side near the touch line for a goal, in the process lobbing the 'keeper. This seemed to seal the Raiders' fate, as they never recovered from this piece of individual brilliance.

Melbourne's fate was sealed six minutes from the final whistle when substitute Sam Poutakidis sent a hopeful cross over from the left side to Rade Culibrk, who controlled the ball and beat his man, before scoring under an advancing Manzella.

After this, Springvale, maintained possession, happy to finish this home game with the three points.

White Eagles: Simic, Mlinar, Cohadzic, M.Mihajlovic, Nikolic, Gacovski, Rikanovic, Culibrk, Styczen, Z.Mihajlovic, Bezbradica (Poutakidis).

Raiders: Manzella, Anastasiou, Boschini, Kitanovski, Gasparini (Grganovic), Angelovski (Lingurovski), Iacovitti, Jolevski, Slifkas, Salievski (Corallo), Cuculeski.

Referee: Senko Rastocic

Votes: 3- Z.Mihajlovic (SWE), 2- Nikolic (SWE), 1- Simic (SWE)

SUNSHINE GEORGIES 1 ST ALBANS SAINTS 0

By Ivan Perkov

On a day that only Melbourne can produce — cold, windy and wet — Sunshine Georgies won their second game of the season against a ten man St Albans Saints, 1-0.

A slippery Chaplin Reserve pitch allowed for a game scarce of goal scoring opportunities, but full of tough uncompromising tackles.

With the former Melbourne Knights coach, Vid Horvat, now at the helm, the Saints started the better of the two. Up front, Hrvoje Karl, Kon Sianidis and Ivan Razov were very mobile while Kruni Razov and goalkeeper Marijan Vunderl commanded from the back.

It was in the 9th minute that the first of three Saints disallowed goals. Karl, the 'scorer', looked stunned when the assistant referee raised his flag for offside.

In a half that was more notable for yellow cards, Sunshine conceded needless free kicks around the penalty box which St Albans failed to convert.

One yellow card, handed to Ivica Klarica for an over the ball challenge, was to prove costly or the Saints.

Within eight minutes of his first, Klarica received his second and the customary red card,

feeling hard done by, he trudged off leaving his team mates to battle on.

The second half continued with waves of St Albans attack, with the Georgies threatening on the counter. A Razov goal was disallowed, while niggling fouls continued to dominate the game, substitutes were readily warming up for an appearance.

It was in the 73rd minute that the Georgies replaced an injured John Tambouras with Steve Stojanovski and seven minutes later, Stojanovski's interception allowed Vince De La Plaza to run and score against a stranded Vunderl.

Towards the end of the game another goal, this time by Ante Kelic, was again disallowed for off side.

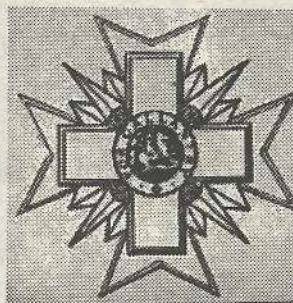
St Albans had much more of the play but were unfortunate with the send off and three disallowed goals. The Georgies fans did not care, they had a win to celebrate.

Georgies: Wardle, Krajacic, Bot, Debono, Tambouras (Stojanovski), Rozanitis, Kanesoulis (Vera), Recchia, Opazo, De La Plaza, Hermosilla (Allain).

Saints: Vunderl, Raspudic, Colina, Karl, Dragicevic, K.Razov, Rados, Klarica (sent off), Sianidis (Cuze), Vojtek (Vidakovic), I.Razov (Kelic).

Referee: Hakan Anaz

Votes: 3- I.Razov (StA), 2- De La Plaza (SG), 1- Opazo (SG)



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ROUND 8 DETAILS (Mon Night)

Melbourne Raiders 1 (Corallo) - Westvale 0

Votes: 3- Corallo (MR), 2- Boschini (MR), 1- Manzella (MR)

Green Gully Cavaliers 1 (Atanasovski) - Bulleen Inter Kings 1 (Gnjidic)

Votes: 3- Della Rocca (BK), 2- Azzopardi (GQ), 1- Stojcevski (BK)

ROUND 9

Altona Magic 5 (Velkovski, Markovski, Todorovski, Trifunov, Sapazovski,) -

South Dandenong 1 (Mezensof)

Preston Lions 2 (Ujgunovski, Emovski) - Altona East 1 (Angelos)

Port Melbourne Sharks 1 (Kakos) - Bentleigh Greens 1 (Nilo)

Springvale White Eagles 3 (Z.Mihajlovic 2, Culibrk) - Melbourne Raiders 0

Sunshine Georgies 1 (De La Plaza) - St Albans Saints 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Port Melbourne Sharks	9	7	2	0	23	6	23
Preston Lions	9	6	0	3	19	9	18
Green Gully Cavaliers	8	5	2	1	18	13	17
Melbourne Raiders	9	4	2	3	11	11	14
Bentleigh Greens	9	3	4	2	16	11	13
Bulleen Inter Kings	8	3	4	1	12	7	13
Altona Magic	9	4	1	4	15	22	13
Altona East	9	3	2	4	10	15	11
Springvale White Eagles	9	2	3	4	12	12	9
South Dandenong	9	2	3	4	13	15	9
St Albans Saints	9	2	2	5	9	16	8
Sunshine Georgies	9	2	2	5	9	19	8
Westvale	8	1	3	4	10	18	6
Fawkner Blues	8	1	2	5	10	13	5

ROUND 10 (split round)

Monday April 5

St Albans Saints v Altona Magic - kick off 3pm at Churchill Reserve

Fawkner Blues v Westvale - kick off 3pm at Smith Reserve

Bentleigh Greens v Bulleen Inter Kings - kick off 3pm at Kingston Heath Reserve

Altona East v Port Melbourne Sharks - kick off 3pm at Paisley Park

Saturday April 10

South Dandenong v Preston Lions - kick off 3pm at George Andrews Reserve

Sunday April 11

Melbourne Raiders v Sunshine Georgies - kick off 8.15pm

at Epping Soccer Stadium

Monday April 12

Green Gully Cavaliers v Springvale White Eagles - kick off 8.15pm

at Green Gully Reserve



VICTORIAN STATE LEAGUES



CRAZY JOHN'S STATE LEAGUE

DIVISION 1

Round 2 results

Oakleigh 1 - Richmond 0
Yarraville Glory 0 - North Geelong Warriors 2
Werribee City 0 - Lalor United 3
Westgate 4 - Melbourne City 2
Northcote City 3 - Doncaster Rovers 3
Kingston City 1 - Heidelberg United 3
Western Suburbs 1 - Springvale City 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lalor United	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Heidelberg United	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Westgate	2	2	0	0	6	3	6
Oakleigh	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Springvale City	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Nth Geelong Warriors	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Richmond	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Melbourne City	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Northcote City	2	0	1	1	4	5	1
Doncaster Rovers	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Western Suburbs	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Kingston City	2	0	0	2	1	5	0
Werribee City	2	0	0	2	1	5	0
Yarraville Glory	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

ROUND 3 FIXTURES (SPLIT ROUND)

Monday April 5

Northcote City v Western Suburbs
Lalor United v Westgate
Oakleigh v Yarraville Glory (kick off 8.30pm)

Sunday April 11

Springvale City v Heidelberg United
Melbourne City v Doncaster Rovers
North Geelong Warriors v Werribee City
Richmond v Kingston City

DIVISION 2 ROUND 2 RESULTS

Geelong 5 - Satellite City Rovers 1
Ringwood City 0 - Knox City 4
Cranbourne Comets 3 - Thomastown/Regent 3
Altona City 0 - Essendon 1
Frankston Strikers 0 - East Richmond 1
Old Scotch Waverley 2 - Croydon City Arrows 0
Diamond Valley United 2 - Frankston Pines 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Geelong	2	2	0	0	7	1	6
Knox City	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Essendon	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Frankston Pines	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Thomastown/Regent	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
East Richmond	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Old Scotch Waverley	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Cranbourne Comets	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Frankston Strikers	2	0	1	1	1	2	1



Altona City	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Satellite City Rovers	2	0	1	1	2	6	1
Diamond Valley United	2	0	0	2	2	6	0
Croydon City Arrows	2	0	0	2	0	4	0
Ringwood City	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

ROUND 3 FIXTURES (SPLIT ROUND)

Monday April 5

East Richmond v Geelong

Saturday April 10

Satellite City Rovers v Croydon City Arrows
Essendon v Frankston Strikers
Frankston Pines v Altona City
Thomastown/Regent v Diamond Valley United
Knox City v Cranbourne Comets
Ringwood City v Old Scotch Waverley

DIVISION 3

Round 2 results (round incomplete)

Keilor Park 0 - Bell Park 3
South Wantirna 1 - Mooroolbark 1
Banyule City 1 - South Springvale 1
Pascoe Vale 0 - Stonnington City 2
Moreland City 3 - Laverton Park 0



	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Stonnington City	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
South Springvale	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Mooroolbark	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Fitzroy City	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
North Coburg United	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Broadmeadows City	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Williamstown	1	1	0	0	4	3	3
Bell Park	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Moreland City	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
South Wantirna	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Laverton Park	2	0	1	1	2	5	1
Banyule City	2	0	0	2	4	6	0
Pascoe Vale	2	0	0	2	0	4	0
Keilor Park	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

ROUND 2 FIXTURES

Monday April 5

Williamstown v North Coburg United
Fitzroy City v Broadmeadows City

ROUND 3 FIXTURES

Saturday April 10

Laverton Park v Stonnington City
Banyule City v Moreland City
North Coburg United v South Springvale
Mooroolbark v Williamstown

Bell Park v South Wantirna
Broadmeadows City v Keilor Park
Fitzroy City v Pascoe Vale

DIVISION 4

Round 2 results

Corio 0 - Keysborough 3
Melton 1 - Geelong Rangers 1
Nunawading City 0 - Langwarrin 4
Sandringham City 5 - Chelsea 1
Seaford United 2 - Croxton Park 4
Lalor 5 - Clifton Hill United 2
Lyndale United 2 - Sunbury United 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Langwarrin	2	2	0	0	7	1	6
Sandringham City	2	1	1	0	7	3	4
Croxton Park	2	1	1	0	6	4	4
Geelong Rangers	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Lyndale United	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Lalor	1	1	0	0	5	2	3
Keysborough	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Seaford United	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Chelsea	2	1	0	1	2	5	3
Melton	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Clifton Hill United	2	0	1	1	4	7	1
Sunbury United	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Corio	2	0	0	2	1	6	0
Nunawading City	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

ROUND 1 FIXTURES

Monday April 5

Croxton Park v Sandringham City
Keysborough v Lalor

ROUND 3 FIXTURES

Saturday April 10

Sunbury United v Clifton Hill United
Croxton Park v Lyndale United
Chelsea v Seaford United
Langwarrin v Sandringham City
Geelong Rangers v Nunawading City
Keysborough v Melton
Corio v Lalor

PROVISIONAL LEAGUE

Provisional League Cup - Round 1 results

Newborough/Yallourn 2 - Morwell Pegasus 1
Templestowe Eagles 1 - Keilor United 2 (aet)
Heatherton United 0 - North Sunshine Eagles 2
Brandon Park 1 - Meadow Park 0
Northern United 2 - North Glenroy 1
Hoppers Crossing 1 - Endeavour United 2 (aet)
Somerton City 1 - Monbulk 4
Dingley City v Riversdale (no result given)
Whittlesea United 1 - University of Melbourne 4
Keon Park 0 - Dandenong 5
Waverley Wanderers 2 - Mill Park 1
Brimbank City 1 - North Reservoir 1 (aet, 3-4 on penalties)
Thornbury United 1 - Newport United 0
Brunswick City 3 - Noble Park 1



Dandenong Inter 0 - Darebin United 7
La Trobe University 1 - West Preston 2

DIVISION 1 ROUND 1 FIXTURES

Saturday April 10

Sydenham Park v Monbulk
South Caulfield v North Sunshine Eagles
Morwell Pegasus v Templestowe Eagles
Endeavour United v Dandenong
Brunswick City v Riversdale

Sunday April 11

Mitcham United v Springvale Condors

DIVISION 2 NORTH-WEST - ROUND 1 FIXTURES

Saturday April 10

Ballarat v Somerton City
Elwood City v Hoppers Crossing
Meadow Park v Broadmeadows United
South Yarra v Glenroy
Keon Park v Mill Park
University of Melbourne v Melbourne University

DIVISION 2 SOUTH-EAST - ROUND 1 FIXTURES

Saturday April 10

Dingley City v Braeside United
Waverley Wanderers v Heatherton United
Monash University v Newborough/Yallourn
Doveton v Brandon Park
Noble Park v Clayton
Ashburton v Dandenong Inter

DIVISION 3 NORTH-WEST - ROUND 1 FIXTURES

Sunday April 11

Flemington Falcons v Whittlesea United
Northern United v West Preston
Brimbank City v Watsonia Heights
La Trobe University v Brimbank
Keilor United v Darebin United
North Glenroy v North Reservoir

DIVISION 3 SOUTH-EAST - ROUND 1 FIXTURES

Sunday April 11

Beaumaris v Newport United
Ivanhoe United v Rowville Eagles
Endeavour Hills v Collingwood City
Noble Park United v North Caulfield
Thornbury United v Parkmore
Old Camberwell Grammar v Moreland United



QUEENSLAND



THEOCHARI ... CATCH OF THE SEASON?



Demetri 'The Fish' Theochari.
Would love the challenge of playing in the national league.

Former Queensland coach, Juan Cutillas named him "The Fish" as in his younger days he had a passion for drinking. Today his passion is pure football.

A former national league player and former team mate describes "The Fish" as a complete player, one who has matured over the past three seasons into a sweeper that possesses good vision and the uncanny ability to read the game.

Most agree that if given the chance, Demetri Theochari could easily make the transition to the national league.

Born in Auckland, New Zealand his family migrated to Australia not long after and settled in Brisbane. Theochari first started playing the game when aged five.

His early playing days were with Grange Thistle and then Brisbane City. It was at Brisbane City he was blooded into the Premier League in 1989 under coach Ian Fagan.

"City was a great club and Ian Fagan really helped my game," Theochari said.

"I had been with the club for three years and had come through their youth and reserve teams but to play for their first team was a real thrill back then."

The next season was spent at Taringa Rovers, which preceded moving overseas and a stint with English club Preston North-End. On returning to Brisbane, Theochari signed with Rochdale Rovers and experienced a grand final victory in 1993.

A broken ankle put paid to the following season for the midfielder but he returned to competitive football with division two side Albany Creek.

However, for the past three years, Theochari has been with his former club Taringa Rovers and it was current coach John Ogden, who saw the benefits of utilising him in a different position.

"I had always been a midfielder and it was John Ogden who felt I would go well as a sweeper. I have played in that position ever since," Theochari said.

"At first I wasn't real keen on the idea but now having tasted it for a few seasons, I don't think I would enjoy any other position as much."

Totally diverse from football is Theochari's 10 year involvement in the family business, an à la Carte restaurant named "The Odd Couple" at Everton Park. Also a liking of golf helps to occupy what little spare time is left in a busy weekly schedule.

On the national league, Theochari said he was keen on the idea.

"I would love to play national league, it is just a matter of finding someone to give me a go.

"It is a big step up of course, but I would love the challenge and the chance to play against better, stronger and quicker players. I am sure I could make the transition given the opportunity," he said.

Standing at six foot and weighing 85 kg, "The Fish" has toughened up in the last few seasons and is now a player with the necessary qualifications to go that one step further.

Meanwhile, in the premier league, Brisbane Lions escaped with a lucky 1-1 home draw against an enthusiastic young Taringa Rovers to maintain a slender one point lead at the top of the Queensland's premier league.

Taringa had enough possession and dominated the more experienced Lions for the majority of the game but paid the price for costly mistakes in front of goal.

The draw enables Lions to retain their unbeaten league record but a thrilling 3-2 win by Rochdale Rovers over former league favourites Brisbane City sees Lions' position suddenly under serious threat.

First half goals from Rochdale trio Steve Fitzsimmons, Clayton Koch and David Pilic was enough to see the visitors hold off Brisbane City who scored a goal in each half from Nathan Carlross and a penalty from Mark Battistin.

In other results, Mt Gravatt's Andy Brayshaw gave the Hawkes their first win of the season over a gallant Toowoomba who have yet to register any

BRISBANE CITY	-	Spencer Park, Newmarket
BRISBANE LIONS	-	Lions Stadium, Richlands
BUNDABERG WAVES	-	Thabeban Sports Complex, Bundaberg
GOLD COAST CITY	-	Southport SC, Ashmore
IPSWICH KNIGHTS	-	Eric Evans Reserve, Bundamba
MT GRAVATT	-	Dittmer Park, Mt Gravatt
ROCHEDALE ROVERS	-	Underwood Park, Rochdale
TARINGA ROVERS	-	Jack Speare Park, Indooroopilly
TOOWOOMBA RAIDERS	-	Gold Park, Toowoomba
WYNNUM	-	Carmichael Park, Tingalpa

points from six games while Gold Coast and Bundaberg drew 1-1 and Ipswich downed Wynnum 4-1.

The game at Richlands between the league leaders and third placed Taringa was a thrilling affair with both sides capable of snatching victory.

Overall, Taringa were the classier outfit but only Andy Packer could add his name to the scoresheet when he slotted home the opening goal after a solo run into the box in the 12th minute.

Taringa watched several chances go begging in the first half and should have gone to the break with a big enough lead to rest comfortably in the second period.

Taringa's Steve Bland almost extended Taringa's lead two minutes after

Packer's opener but was denied by a brilliant save from Lions' keeper and man-of-the-match Jason Lucas who tipped the shot over the crossbar.

Lions had to wait until four minutes from the break for the equaliser with only their second serious shot of the half when classy striker Vedran Becirbegovic controlled a cross brilliantly on the edge of the box before striking his shot out of the reach of Taringa keeper Clint Del Santo.

After the break Taringa served notice there would be no let up when Lucas was again called on for a brilliant diving save off a header from Jason Poggi just three minutes after the resumption.

Packer had a further two chances denied by Lucas inside the next ten minutes before Lions' Steve Starr tried to inspire his team with a 20 metre dig which sailed marginally over the crossbar.

Lions almost took an undeserved lead from a free-kick outside the box midway through the second half but De Santo was equal to the task tipping Darren Hillier's chip over the crossbar.

Hillier's effort sparked a belated comeback from Lions who tried to catch Taringa on the break.

Striker Greg Di Losa rose high to head a Starr cross from deep on the left towards the top upright but Del Santo was equal to the task again tipping it over the bar.

The game's only black-spot came when Starr was given his marching orders one minute from normal time after receiving his second yellow card for bringing down Taringa striker Scott Robinson during some desperate last minute defence.

Taringa coach John Ogden shook his head in disbelief after the match.

"It's a pity we didn't win because we were easily the better side but just couldn't put away one of our many chances," he said.

RESULTS, TABLES AND THIS WEEK'S ROUND IN QLD

XXXX LEAGUE

	P	L	D	L	G	A	Diff	Pts
Brisbane Lions	6	5	1	0	17	9	8	16
Rochdale Rov	6	5	0	1	20	6	14	15
Taringa Rovers	6	3	1	2	10	4	6	10
Brisbane City	5	3	0	2	11	9	2	9
IPSW Knights	6	3	0	3	10	10	0	9
B'berg Waves	6	2	2	2	10	10	0	8
Gold Coast	6	2	2	2	10	15	-5	8
Mt Gravatt	5	1	2	2	7	9	-2	5
Wynnum	6	1	0	5	7	17	-10	3
Toowoomba Utd	6	0	0	6	3	16	-13	0

ROUND 6 SCORES

Toowoomba Utd	.....0	Mt Gravatt	.....1
Brisbane City	.....2	Rochdale Rov	.....3
IPSW Knights	.....4	Wynnum	.....1
Gold Coast	.....1	B'berg Waves	.....1
Brisbane Lions	.....1	Taringa Rovers	.....1

DIVISION ONE SOUTH

	P	W	D	L	G	A	Diff	Pts
Rocklea Utd	5	5	0	0	30	9	21	15
Capalaba	4	4	0	0	11	2	9	12
Souths Utd	5	2	1	2	13	6	7	7
Slacks Creek	6	2	1	3	11	19	-8	7
Redlands Utd	4	1	2	1	8	10	-2	5
Inala City	5	1	1	3	10	17	-7	4
Beenleigh	5	1	1	3	5	15	-10	4
Olympic Utd	4	1	0	3	6	9	-3	3
Acacia Ridge	4	0	2	2	4	11	-7	2

ROUND 6 SCORES

Rocklea Utd11	Slacks Creek1
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Capalaba5	Inala City2
Souths Utd1	Redlands Utd1
Beenleigh2	Olympic Utd1

DIVISION ONE NORTH

	P	L	D	L	G	A	Diff	Pts
Albany Creek	5	5	0	0	13	5	8	15
Eastern Subs	5	3	2	0	8	4	4	11
Uni of Qld	6	3	1	2	1	10	1	10
North Star	5	3	0	2	14	9	5	9
Pine Rivers Utd	5	2	2	1	9	7	2	8
Newmarket	5	2	1	2	10	9	1	7
Mitchelton	5	1	1	3	7	10	-3	4
Grange Thistle	6	0	2	4	7	15	-8	2
The Gap	6	0	1	5	14	24	-10	1

ROUND 6 SCORES

Uni of Qld	.....2	Grange Thistle	.....0
The Gap	.....1	Pine Rivers Utd	.....2
North Star	.....0	Albany Creek	.....1
Newmarket	.....0	Eastern Subs	.....0

ROUND 7

03-04	Taringa Rovers	v	Mt Gravatt	0245
03-04	Brisbane Lions	v	Gold Coast	0700
03-04	B'berg Waves	v	Ipswich Knights	0700
03-04	Wynnum	v	Brisbane City	0245
03-04	Rochdale Rov	v	Toowoomba Utd	0700

**SW GLOBAL GAME SPONSORED BY THE FOUR DIEGOS
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Waxworks lookalikes ... Zidane and Bartz know they've made it when this happens. The players are in the middle (I think!).



Current English boss Kevin Keegan at training before the Poland game



Canada's Paul Peschosolid against Duisberg in a friendly midweek. Canada lost 2-0.



Worthy winner ... Dane Aian Nielson after his goal won the Worthington Cup for Spurs over Leicester.

WORLD YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS



Nigeria '99

10th FIFA World Youth Championship



Tunisia was the first African nation to hold a WYC, in fact it was the inaugural event for U/20s, and now, 22 years later, it is back in Africa.

But this is certainly the first time that a FIFA competition has been hosted by a country in sub-Saharan Africa. And it is a first for Nigeria who are the hosts this time; they were originally scheduled to run the 1995 event, but medical considerations made it necessary to alter the venue that year, with Qatar springing in to fill the gap at short notice.

But at the second attempt everything will be in place: 24 teams from all over the world will compete in Nigeria from 3 to 24 April, playing a total of 52 matches to decide who will carry off the coveted WYC trophy for 1999.

Back in 1995 it had been planned to use just four stadiums — in Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna — but this time there will be six or even eight venues. This

is a consequence of the fact that the number of teams in the final round was increased to 24 for the 1997 tournament in Malaysia, and so the number of stadiums had to be increased for scheduling reasons.

The title also contains a hint of adventure, on the part of the local organising committee, who as yet have no experience of running a major event of this calibre with worldwide interest and importance.

However, they have been very active and enthusiastic in their efforts to make sure things run smoothly. The state has recognised the significance of this WYC and has made funds available for bringing facilities in the stadiums up to the required level.

Huge efforts have also been made to make sure that transport, accommodation, medical and telecommunication arrangements also meet international standards. The tournament is certainly providing a big challenge, and Nigeria is tackling it whole heartedly.

On the sporting side, the host country must be counted among the favourites. Their best achievement so far was winning the Olympic Football tournament in 1996, but the "Super Eagles", as the national A team is called, have also performed well at continental level and on their appearances in the World Cup finals rounds in 1994 and 1998.

Yet in the U-20 category, no African team has ever made it right to the top. Nigeria reached the final in 1989 (losing to Portugal) and Ghana also took silver in 1993 (beaten by Brazil). But perhaps this will be the year in which the strength Africa has shown at the U-17 level will come through to the next stage up.

Of the eight U-17 world championships held so far, African teams have won on four occasions: Nigeria in 1985 and 1993 and Ghana in 1991 and 1995. Their dominance of this category is matched at the U-20 level by European (five titles) and South American teams (six).

The countries which top the list are Brazil and Argentina with three wins each. Argentina, champions in 1995 in Qatar and 1997 in Malaysia will be going for a record of three titles in a row, a feat that no country has yet achieved.

Brazil will be looking for revenge over their arch-

rivals after their semi-final defeat in Malaysia, and Uruguay, who reached the final in 1997, must again be reckoned in with a good chance.

The main obstacles to further South American success will come from Europe, in the form of 1981 champions Germany and double winners Portugal (1989 and 1991), as well as from Africa, as noted above.

The Asian teams will be hoping to improve on past performances, and this time their contingent includes a newcomer to the competition in the shape of Kazakhstan. Mexico could be a good outside bet, while the rest of the CONCACAF teams are not counted among the close favourites.

Representing Oceania once again, Australia have a good record behind them and they too will be watched with interest at this tournament. The final is set: it will be on 24 April in the National Stadium in the major city, Lagos.

From the first World Youth Tournament in 1977 until 1995, 16 teams had been allowed to qualify for the final competition.

In order to give a further boost to the prestige of FIFA's major youth competition, the number of contenders was increased from 16 to 24 as from 1997 (AFC 4, CAF 4, CONCACAF 4, CONMEBOL 4, UEFA 6, OFC 1, host 1).

Official Stats

The host cities and stadiums

Lagos	National Stadium
Ibadan	Liberty Stadium
Enugu	Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium
Calabar	U.J. Esuene Stadium
Bauchi	Tafawa Balewa Stadium
Kano	Sani Abacha Stadium
Kaduna	Ahamadu Belo Stadium
Port Harcourt	Liberation Stadium

The referees

AYAD Ahmad	LIB
DAAMI Mourad	TUN
DAUDEN IBABEZ Arturo	ESP
GUEZZAZ Mohamed	MOR
LARSEN Claus Bo	DEN
LU Jun	CHN
MATTUS William	CRC
MENDE GONZALEZ Gustavo	URU
*MICALEFF Simon	AUS
OLANIYAN Olufemi	NGA
RAMOS Felipe	MEX
SANCHEZ Angel Osvaldo	ARG
SHMOLIK Serguey	BLR
SIMON Carlos Eugenio	BRA
SIRIC Zeljko	HRV
WEGEREFF Jan	HOL

Assistant referees

ADJENGUI Taoufik	TUN
*BOWLDER John	AUS
CHARLES Curtis	ATG
CONSTANTINESCU Tudor	ROM
FARAG Wagih Ahmed	EGY
GIACOMUZZI GOTZE Miguel	PAR
HENRIQUES Carlos	RSA
ISHOLA Adeshina	NGA
JEDDIOUI Abdelmajid	MOR
KORINJOH James	NGA
KOSHRABI Ali	IRN
KRISHNAN Visva Nathan	SIN
LAPPAS Konstantinos	GRE
MOHAMMED Haseeb	TTO
MUDZAMIRI Brighton	ZIM
OGUNTADE Segun	NGA
PINEDA FUENTES Yuri Rafael	PER
POBLETE ESCOBAR Hector	CHI
RIVERA Walter	HON
SAEED Mohamed	MDV
SIGURDSSON Pjetur	ISL
SIMAO Pedro	AGO
TOMUSANGE Ali	UGA
YEBOAH Justice	GHA

The qualified teams

UEFA (6)	Ireland Republic
	Germany
	Croatia
	Portugal
	Spain
	England
AFC (4)	Korea Republic
	Japan
	Saudi Arabia
	Kazakhstan
CAF (4)	N/A at time of printing
CONMEBOL (4)	Argentina
	Uruguay
	Brazil
	Paraguay
CONCACAF (4)	USA
	Costa Rica
	Mexico
	Honduras
OFC (1)	Australia
Host (1)	Nigeria

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

It began in Tunisia in 1977, modestly enough, with the FIFA Technical Report bemoaning the lack of spectators. But by the early 1990s the championship had grown to an event of enormous importance with worldwide television coverage.

The FIFA/Coca-Cola Cup has swept the football globe. Securing a committed long-term sponsor was central to the realisation of a project which Dr Joao Havelange had promised when he took office in 1974. Above all, however, the success of the concept of this competition has always depended upon the particular flavour of the games: the flavour of youth, of spontaneity, of adventure.

The inevitable teething troubles experienced in Tunisia in 1977 were mostly smoothed out by the next competition in Japan in 1979, one of the first major international football events in that country which helped to trigger interest and enthusiasm for the sport there. And the role of the FIFA/Coca-Cola Cup as an ambassador to so-called "developing" football countries continued in 1981, when it went Down Under for the first time.

In 1983, however, the event enjoyed its first really enormous success in a traditionally strong football country, Mexico, where the final between Brazil and Argentina drew a capacity crowd of 105,000.

The Soviet Union hosted the finals in 1985, in 1987 it went to South America for the first (and so far only) time when Chile was the organiser, and in 1989 the futuristic King Fahd Stadium on the outskirts of Riyadh was the spectacular setting for several matches.

The 1991 final saw even the 1983 attendance eclipsed, as 127,000 — the second largest crowd ever to attend a FIFA match — crammed into Lisbon's Stadium of Light to cheer the home team to a repeat of their 1989 victory. In 1993, the Australians revived memories of the 1981 finals and surpassed them with a superbly organised championship to which the Young Socceroos made their own thrilling contribution.

Latin football dominated the 1995 event in Qatar (which had taken over the role of hosts at barely three weeks' notice after Nigeria was considered unable to stage it) as well as the 1997 tournament in Malaysia.

WINNERS

The list of honours over the years is led by Brazil with three gold medals and two silvers. Only Argentina, winners in 1979 (with a team containing the likes of Diego Maradona and Ramon Diaz), 1995 and 1997, and Portugal with their wins in 1989 and 1991, have also claimed the trophy more than once.

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The other winners were USSR (in 1977 with a line-up featuring young Vladimir Bessonov as the competition's outstanding individual), West Germany (in 1981 against a surprise team from Qatar) and Yugoslavia, whose 1987 vintage included today's Croatian stars Boban, Prosinecki and Suker.

Africa has twice supplied the losing finalists, Ghana producing a marvellous display to take the silver in Australia in 1993 and Nigeria running Portugal close in 1989.

HOST COUNTRIES

From Tunisia to Nigeria: the FIFA/Coca-Cola Cup has moved from continent to continent, with only Australia having been host twice (1981 and 1993). It is an event that Australia has a proud history in, and hopefully this weekend will be the start of something special for our Young Socceroos on their African Adventure.

Compiled by

Soccer Weekly

ITALY

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LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL FOR AZZURRI!

Italy maintains top spot in group one of European qualifying by defeating Denmark 2-1 on Saturday. Juventus duo Filippo Inzaghi and Antonio Conte were the goal scorers for the Italians in the first half.

Denmark had a nightmare start to the game when debutant Jesper Groenkjaer's first touch in international football in the first minute was a weak back-pass to goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel allowing Inzaghi to latch on to the loose ball and round the Manchester United keeper to score.

"It is always difficult to be alone with the goalkeeper so early in a match but this time I managed to score," a jubilant Inzaghi said.

After furious pressure in the first half Denmark were rewarded for some more good play in the opening stages of the second when Ebbe Sand equalised with a 58th minute rebound from close range after substitute Miklos Molnar headed against the post.

But Conte headed home the winner from close range 12 minutes later — perhaps a lucky omen for Juventus who play Manchester United in the European Cup semi-

final next month.

AS Roma striker Francesco Totti set up the Italians' winning goal with a deft cross from the left.

Both he and Conte came in as substitutes, Conte at halftime and Totti in the 65th minute, and Italian coach Dino Zoff was pleased with his tactical gamble.

"The main difference was that we capitalised on our chances more effectively," he said, calling the win deserved although his side had been on the defensive for nearly 90 minutes.

Tottenham Hotspurs' Danish midfielder Allan Nielsen had two good attempts on goal but saw both his first half shot and second half header go just wide. Parma goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon made a number of good saves.

"I was tested many times. Denmark very often had so many players inside the box. If we look at the chances a draw would maybe have been a more fair result," Buffon said.

Italy stay top of the group with nine points from three matches, but Zoff cautioned against taking anything for granted.

"We have not yet qualified. Important matches remain to be played," he said. In their next qualifier Italy play Belarus at home at Ancona tomorrow night.

For the Danes the defeat, their second at home after October's 2-1 loss to Wales, almost certainly spelt the end of the road in the Euro2000 campaign. They so far have only two points from four games.

Coach Bo Johansson refused to throw in the towel although he admitted his side is facing an uphill task.

"We must fight on. We must win all our remaining matches to remain in contention for second place, and hope that Italy will go on winning against all the others," he said.

"We made a mistake pulling back after our equaliser. They put us under pressure and scored the winner," he said.

Striker Martin Joergensen, who earns his living with Italian Serie A Udinese,



"My body is in tumult." Conte celebrates in true Italian style against Denmark.



Heads up: Italy's Fabio Cannavaro in action against Denmark in European qualifying action. Italy won 2-1.

also believed Denmark stood a sporting chance of reaching their fifth successive European championship finals.

"We have four matches left. If we take 12 points I think we can still finish second," he said.

So far in their campaign towards Euro 2000, Italy has defeated Wales away from home by 2-0 and Switzerland at home by the same scoreline.

This recent win against the Danes places the Italians in a comfortable position on top of group one going into their next game against Belarus on March 31.

Belarus sits on the other end of group one having managed only one point in three matches.

Italy: Buffon, Panucci, Nesta, Cannavaro, Maldini,

Fuser (Conte 1'), D. Baggio, Di Baggio, Di Francesco, Inzaghi, Chiesa (Totti 18').

Denmark: Schmeichel, Helveg, Henriksen, Hoegh, Heintze, Goldbaek (Colding 38'), A. Nielsen (Tofting 32'), Thomsen, Jorgensen, Sand, Groenkjaer (Molnar 8').

Italy beat Denmark 2-1 in their European Under-21 championship group one qualifier on Friday.

Scorers: Denmark: Dennis Rommedahl 4

Italy: Andrea Pirlo 35pen, Nicola Ventola 90

Halftime: 1-1.

Attendance: 2,744



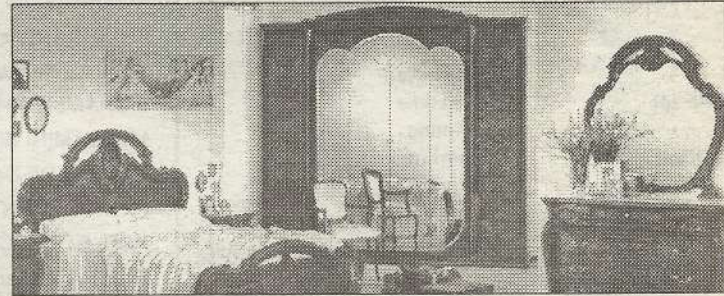
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EUROPE

Soccer Weekly

FRANCE NUMBER TWO
IN WORLD BEHIND BRAZIL

Sponsorship deals for the 2000 European championships are being sealed according to schedule, International Sport Leisure (ISL) said.

So far Euro 2000 has reached agreement with seven official sponsors, an ISL spokeswoman said. ISL is the commercial partner of UEFA, European soccer's governing body.

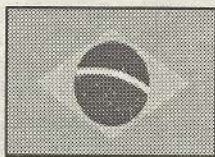
"We are still in negotiations with a number of other companies and I believe we are ahead of time compared with the championships in 1996," the spokeswoman said.

She said UEFA would probably seek 10-to-12 official sponsors for the championships to be held in June and July 2000 in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Some Dutch media reports have said Euro 2000 organisers had found only four companies as its high fees deterred certain long-term sponsors.

FIFA rankings (ranking, last month's ranking, points)

1. (1) Brazil	824 points
2. (2) France	786
3. (3-) Croatia	738
4. (3-) Italy	737
5. (5) Germany	734
6. (6) Argentina	731
7. (7) Czech Republic	726
8. (8) Netherlands	721
9. (9) Spain	704
10. (10) Romania	697
11. (11) England	693
12. (12) Mexico	687
13. (13) Norway	674
14. (14) Sweden	656
15. (15) Denmark	650
(16) Yugoslavia	650
17. (17) Portugal	637
18. (18) Austria	635
19. (19) Morocco	627
20. (22) Paraguay	612
21. (20) Chile	610
22. (21) Belgium	604
23. (23) United States	603
24. (25) South Africa	599
25. (24) Slovakia	597
26. (26) Scotland	595
27. (28) Poland	590
28. (27) Colombia	588
29. (28) Tunisia	585
30. (30) Bulgaria	579

Italy
1905

Brazil topped the FIFA world rankings released on Wednesday while Croatia relegated Italy to fourth position.

Paraguay made the biggest move among the top 30 nations, moving up two places to 20, the first time it has been in the top 20.

Swedish football chiefs said on Wednesday that UEFA boss Lennart Johansson would not call for an investigation into bribery allegations made against FIFA president Sepp Blatter unless more evidence came to light.

Reports this week suggested Johansson, who was beaten by Blatter for soccer's top job last year, would demand a probe into claims in a book that Blatter had bought the crucial votes to secure the job.

JOHANSSON
LAYS OFF
SEPP

Swedish football association president Lars-Aake Lagrell said "How they stole the game", by British writer David Yallop, contained nothing new.

"The book is based on old rumours that we had heard already before last year's elections," Lagrell told Swedish agency TT.

Lagrell said that more evidence about the allegations was needed before an investigation could be opened.

Alternatively, Blatter would have to face a legal process to clear his name, he added.

Lagrell said no-one wanted a new ballot for the FIFA leadership, and added: "Besides, I wouldn't imagine that Johansson would offer himself as a candidate once again."

But he admitted he was surprised by the result of the FIFA leadership ballot. "The way we judged it then was that we lost 30 to 35 votes over the night before the elections," he said.

Blatter was right to take legal action against Yallop's book, said Lagrell.

"I understand him, he is innocent."



Sepp Blatter ... David Yallop's book contains the usual Blatter rumours.

SUMMER SOCCER SAYS PLATINI

Michel Platini, who is masterminding FIFA's plans to modernise soccer, has come out in favour of a "summer season" from February to December to help the organization of a World Cup every two years.

"To achieve this goal [to stage the World Cup every two years], we must reform the calendar to restore the credibility of national teams," he was quoted as saying in the French sports daily L'Equipe.

Platini said the solution could be "a summer season, which would start in February and would finish early in December."

"It will not be easy because of the concentration of the dates of European cups, the dropping of the Confederations Cup and of the Intercontinental Cup to be replaced by a club World Cup, but it will help players get a real one-month break in the winter, which they badly need," the former chief of the French World Cup organising committee added.

Platini said the new calendar could start in 2005 to allow a World Cup to be held in 2006.

He said he had also discussed with FIFA president Sepp Blatter the idea of a "Centenary Cup" in 2004 between the seven World Cup winners — Uruguay, Italy, Germany, Brazil, England, Argentina and France.

FIFA will celebrate its centenary in 2004.



Italian newspapers have blamed owner Massimo Moratti for Inter Milan's disastrous state and urged the club to try to save its dignity in the final weeks of the season.

Coach Mircea Lucescu, who had replaced Gigi

Simoni last November, stepped down following Inter's humiliating 4-0 loss at relegation-threatened Sampdoria which put it in ninth place and 19 points behind of leaders Lazio.

"Inter, at least save your dignity," ran a frontpage headline in the Gazzetta dello Sport daily, which said the club had lost its willpower after crashing out of the European Cup to Manchester United.

The paper said the big spending club had mishandled the sacking of Simoni as well as the hiring of Romanian Lucescu, who had been brought in as a caretaker to lead the club to the end of the season, when former Juventus coach Marcello Lippi is set to take over.

La Repubblica daily pointed the finger directly at oil baron Moratti in a frontpage editorial entitled "The Error of Moratti."

"The responsibility goes to the man with the most power, that is, Moratti," it said.

"Perhaps he will have finally understood that firing Simoni was not only unpopular [as Moratti himself called it], but also a huge error," the paper said.

"Maybe Simoni would not have won the title without an injured Ronaldo, but he would not have lost seven and drawn three of his last ten games, either," it added.

Belarus officials called in army helicopters on Wednesday to dry out their pitch before Saturday's European Championship group one qualifier against Switzerland.

Two army helicopters were called to dry out the field at the Dynamo Stadium in Minsk after melting snow left the pitch in poor condition.

The under-21 European championship qualifier between the two countries was moved to June as Belarus officials could not find a suitable venue. The former Soviet republic has no under-soil heating at any of their stadiums.

Bayer Leverkusen's Dutch striker Erik Meijer will sign a pre-contract agreement with Liverpool.

The 29-year-old is expected to sign for the premier league club but he will not train with Liverpool until the

summer when his contract with the German club expires, a Liverpool spokesman said.

His transfer will be completed without a fee under the Bosman ruling. Meijer is keen to move to the club he supported as a child even though Stuttgart expressed an interest in signing him.

His arrival could see the end of Sean Dundee and Karlheinz Riedle's Liverpool careers.

Radomir Antic will embark upon his second spell as coach of Atletico Madrid, picking up the reins 10 months after he left, club president Jesus Gil said.

Antic, who won the league and cup double in his first season in charge at the Spanish club in 1995-96 only to leave under a cloud two years later, will sign a 15-month contract.

The Serb becomes Atletico's third coach of the season, following the departures of Italian Arrigo Sacchi in February and caretaker Carlos Aguiar, whose resignation was accepted earlier.

Antic will join a club who are precariously placed just six points above the relegation zone after taking only one point from their last eight matches.

That crisis was recognised on Tuesday by Gil, who had originally rejected the resignation of Aguiar.

"We're doing everything we can to get ourselves out of trouble and Radomir Antic is the best solution to the problems we have at the moment," Gil said.

"Antic made some mistakes during his final season in charge and he'd admit that himself. But we all make mistakes and now all that is in the past."

Antic, who has also held posts at Real Zaragoza, Real Madrid and Oviedo in a 10-year career in Spain, has not been involved in coaching since he left Atletico in May 1998.

Last year he rejected an offer to become coach of the Yugoslav national team, saying he wanted to stay in Spain where he is regarded as a great motivator of players.



Michel Platini has floated the summer season idea.

Antic's unexpected success in his first season in charge at Atletico was followed by two far leaner years and he made way for Sacchi at the end of last season, which the club finished in seventh place.

His brief for the first three months of his reign will simply be to preserve Atletico's top-flight status and any further progress in the UEFA Cup is likely to be regarded as a bonus. Atletico meet Italy's Parma in the semi-finals next month.

Compiled by

EURO 2000

Soccer Weekly

WORLD CHAMPS
HELD IN UKRAINE

Ukraine took a big step towards qualifying for their first major finals when they held world champions France 0-0 away in a European championship group four match.

The Ukrainians, who retained their two-point lead over the French at the top of the group, could have stolen a famous victory but for two fine saves by France goalkeeper Fabien Barthez from striker Andriy Shevchenko in the last 15 minutes.

In the end, an exciting match of a high technical skills that could easily have produced several goals was decided by arguably the two best defences in the world.

France coach Roger Lemerre was not unhappy with the result. He said: "This was a good point. We were not surprised by the Ukrainian team. It was a very physically tough challenge."

"It was a high level game and as with all high level games you can win them on the smallest detail. We have not lost too much and Ukraine have not gained too much."

In the first half, France, who missed the creative force of the injured Zinedine Zidane, had their best first 45 minutes since the World Cup and should have scored from one of several clear chances.

Ukraine had to thank goalkeeper Olexander Shovkovsky for some brilliant saves as France threatened.

After three minutes, he dived to block a header from defender Laurent Blanc after a free kick to the far post by Emmanuel Petit.



Youri Djorkaeff shapes to shoot.

on the left. Barthez, diving to his left, pushed out for a corner.

Five minutes later, Rebrov prised open the defence with a perfectly timed through ball that left Shevchenko face to face with Barthez but the goalkeeper blocked the striker's hurried shot with his feet.

Lemerre said: "The defence was perfect apart from that one moment."



Duggary in full flight against Ukraine.

In the 10th the Olympique Marseille defender had a drive from the edge of the box superbly turned away.

In the 25th, striker Nicolas Anelka turned beautifully on a long ball out of defence to leave two defenders stranded and serve Youri Djorkaeff, but Shovkovsky blocked the Inter Milan forward's shot at point blank range.

Two minutes into the second half, midfielder Andriy Husin's header from a corner to the near post was parried by Barthez in France's first real scare.

As the French attack was neutralised by Ukraine's "funnel" defence, Shevchenko and his Dnyamo Kiev strike partner Serhiy Rebrov nearly stole the match for the visitors.

In the 75th minute, Shevchenko surprised the defence with a curling shot to the far post from outside the box

A hat-trick from sweeper Vilmos Sebok helped Hungary to a comfortable 5-0 victory over Liechtenstein in their group seven match.

Hungary took the lead in the 17th minute when Jozsef Sebok struck home a powerful drive from close range.

Vilmos Sebok headed in a cross from Norbert Toth in the 33rd minute and then repeated the feat from an Istvan Pisont free-kick nine minutes later.

After some resistance from Liechtenstein early in the second half, Skipper Bela Illes made it four, tapping home a low cross from Tibor Dombi in the 74th minute. Vilmos Sebok completed his hat-trick with a penalty after Dombi had been brought down by Patrik Hefli.

A RAUL ROUT!

Four goals from Spanish striker Raul Gonzalez led a 9-0 humiliation of Austria on Saturday as Jose Antonio Camacho's side hauled their European Championship qualifying campaign back in gear in roaring style.

Camacho, who had promised a five-speed performance from his side in the buildup to the game, was left to watch in admiration as his players cruised past their stalled opponents.

Two goals in the first 17 minutes from Real Madrid striker Raul effectively put an end to the group six contest and another double from Ismael Urzaiz, either side of a Fernando Hierro penalty, put the home team five up by halftime.

Raul completed his hat-trick three minutes after the break and added a fourth on 73 minutes.

An Arnold Wett own goal three minutes later added to Austrian woes and Fran Gonzalez capped an excellent display in the midfield by notching the ninth five minutes from time.

The result sees Spain move up to third in their qualifying group, three points behind leaders Cyprus and one back from Austria, both of whom have played a game more.

After a shaky start, which saw them lose 3-2 to Cyprus and then edge out Israel 2-1, Spain still have a lot to do if they are to qualify for the Euro 2000 finals in Belgium and Holland — a fact recognised by a humble Raul as the game ended.

"We had to demonstrate our quality and today we've done that," said the Real Madrid star, who has also scored 18 goals in the league this season.

"But we still haven't won anything — just the three points — and we have to go on and play as well as that in the remaining games."

He added: "At least the crowd have enjoyed themselves."

Ten-man Slovakia kept alive their hopes of qualifying for next year's European championship finals by holding Romania to a goalless draw in an uninspiring group seven qualifier on Saturday.

English referee Graham Barber sent off Slovak defender Valdimir Labant in the 77th minute after he picked up his second yellow card.

Romania dominated most of the play but made no real impact against the visiting defence — even with the one-man advantage in the closing stages.

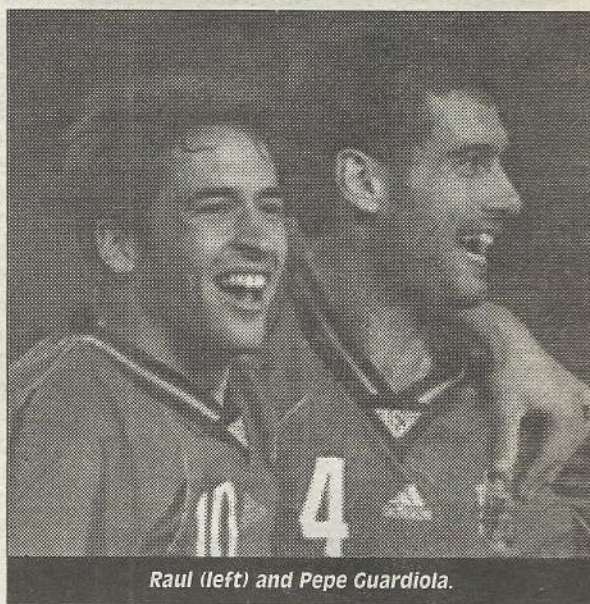
A determined Slovak side came closest to scoring in the first half when striker Josef Majoros hit the post with a well-struck 25-metre shot.

With all six teams in the group having played four matches, the teams are tightly bunched, with Portugal top on nine points, followed by Romania on eight and Hungary and Slovakia both on seven.

Liechtenstein (3 points and Azerbaijan (0) are out of contention.

On the night another Manchester United striker, Paul Scholes, destroyed Poland, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer gave Norway's hopes of reaching next year's European Championship finals a huge boost after scoring both goals in their 2-0 win over Greece.

Immediately after the match, Greece's Romanian coach Anghel Iordanescu announced he was resigning, blaming himself for the defeat before 50,000 home fans.



Raul (left) and Pepe Guardiola.

"Everyone who loses must pay. Now I have to pay," Iordanescu said. "Our chances of qualifying are now almost nothing."

Iordanescu has had a tempestuous relationship with the Greek F.A. since taking over the team last summer and it remains to be seen whether he really does quit for good.

Norway's win gave them seven points from four games, one ahead of Latvia who have a game in hand, and two clear of Greece, who play Latvia next Wednesday in Riga.

Solskjaer struck first in the 38th minute, slipping in behind the Greek keeper. His second, on a breakaway three minutes from time, left the Greek defence protesting furiously that he was was offside.



Solskjaer is congratulated by his Norwegian teammates.

The spirited Greeks had a number of chances early on, the closest from Newcastle United's Nikos Dabizas which hit the post shortly before Solskjaer fired Norway into the lead.

Norwegian coach Nils Johan Semb said scoring first was the key. "Greece had a chance to score in the beginning which would have changed the whole game. But we were lucky to score in our first chance, which is something which happens in big matches," he said.

Iordanescu, who took his native Romania to the World Cup in 1994 and 1998, said Greece did not make use of the width of the pitch.

"We created three good chances to score but I am sorry we didn't get the result," he said.

Compiled by

UK

Soccer Weekly

GAZZA HAS NO HARD FEELINGS OVER OMISSION

Paul Gascoigne bears no grudges over his omission from the England squad.

"There are some good young English players coming through and I think that's great," the Middlesbrough midfielder insisted.

"And I feel so proud when I see young lads coming through and doing well for their country.

"Jamie Redknapp, for example, is a great player. He has vision, skill and is very talented.

"But he does bore me when all he wants to talk about is football!"

Axed on the eve of last year's World Cup by Glenn Hoddle, Gazza is happy to concentrate on the Premiership. "There's been a lot of support for me since the World Cup. I am enjoying myself, trying to give good performances," he said.

Kevin Campbell is signing for Everton after being rescued from his Turkish nightmare and the president who branded him a cannibal.

Striker Campbell joins Goodison's survival fight on loan for the rest of the season. His agent Paul Stretford met Trabzonspor president Mehmet Ali Yilmaz to thrash out a compromise move. Everton will not even have to pay a rental fee for Campbell.

Stretford said: "There were angry words as you would expect after what has happened.

"To be fair to Trabzonspor, they did not have to let Kevin leave. It needed some give on their part for the move to happen."

Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson has slapped a £1.5million price-tag on Terry Cooke.

Ferguson is increasing his valuation on squad man Cooke, who is on loan at Manchester City.

But, ironically, it could work out to be a favour for City as First Division high-flyers Bradford have been scared off by the fee. City are the only club who can sign the winger after tomorrow's transfer deadline as he is already registered with them.

Jim Jefferies insisted that the sale of Jim Hamilton to Aberdeen for £250,000 was not a sacrifice, given his long-running efforts at meeting the valua-

tion Celtic have placed on Darren Jackson.

The 32-year-old will put pen to paper on a two-year deal with an option on a third after Hearts increased their previous £350,000 offer on a split-fee basis.

The Hearts manager, whose side have yet to score this year, is banking on the out-of-favour former Hibs and Scotland forward to give his side attacking dig — despite over four months' cold storage at Parkhead.

Jackson has scored only once for Dr Jozef Venglos' team in 15 competitive games and was released early from a loan deal with Coventry after Gordon Strachan admitted he was surprised just how low his confidence had slipped.

But Jefferies said: "Darren was outstanding for Celtic's under-21s against us a couple of weeks ago. He looks after himself well and, although we have only spoken briefly, he is really enthusiastic about joining us.

The deal with Darren would have gone ahead even if Jim had stayed and it had nothing to do with his situation. The fact is Jim's contract was up early next season anyway and we would have got nothing then.

"Our problem is we have not been scoring. It's not all Jim's fault, but he has played in most of these games and the money we have got for him will allow us to bring somebody else in."

His target is Falkirk defender Kevin James, also interesting Aberdeen, Kilmarnock and QPR, but who would cost more than £500,000.

Hamilton — whose father, Jim, played for the Dons in the late Sixties — was paraded after signing for four years at Pittodrie and made his debut in a testimonial match for Montrose goalkeeper Dave Larter.

He said: "I was a bit surprised that the manager was prepared to let me go. I never asked for a transfer, but I am more than delighted to be coming home to Aberdeen.

"I was in no hurry to get away from Tynecastle, and I certainly wasn't forced out either. I could have stayed until the end of my contract but it is nice that Hearts can now buy a couple of players.

"I would have liked to have left them in a better position and I hope they do survive. But my priori-



Gazza is comfortable with his exclusion from the national team set-up.

ties now lie here and it is really exciting to be linking up with players like Eoin Jess and Robbie Winters.

Aberdeen manager Paul Hegarty was delighted with his cut-price capture. He said: "Everybody knows we desperately need to strengthen our defence, but when you get a quality player available at this price you have got to go for it."

Philip Scott will complete his dream move to Sheffield Wednesday today after the Premier-league outfit doubled their offer to St Johnstone to £100,000.

Meanwhile, the Hillsborough club have had a meagre bid of £100,000 for Celtic pair Phil O'Donnell and Simon Donnelly turned down by the Parkhead club.

relieved to restore some order to his life after a season of mounting uncertainty.

"It has been confusing to say the least," he said. "There has been one managerial upheaval after another and there have been times when I have wondered what might happen next.

"George Graham was not exactly my biggest fan at Leeds, then David O'Leary took over and dropped me in his second game in charge.

"I moved to Italy and looked forward to a new challenge at Sampdoria, only for David Platt to leave four weeks later."

Sharpe said of his latest move: "This has been a tough choice. Joe Royle did a great job of selling City to me and I left Maine Road intending to sign for them.

"But Bradford were able to offer me the prospect of getting back into the Premiership. That tipped the balance."

Meanwhile, Barnsley manager John Hendrie is planning a deadline day move for Stoke City's Icelandic defender Larus Sigurdsson — after signing Brazilian midfield player Fumaca.

Lee Sharpe has agreed to help Bradford's Premiership push after turning down Manchester City for a second time.

The former Manchester United winger will be at Valley Parade on loan for the rest of the season and will join in a £1.6million deal if they are promoted.

Sharpe's decision came as a desperate blow to City boss Joe Royle, who earlier tried to sign him before he started a loan spell at Sampdoria three months ago.

But Leeds' former England winger was simply

LUTON LURCH INTO CRISIS

Luton have gone into receivership with estimated debts of £3million. The decision follows a month of legal wrangling among Luton's four-man board, which began when chairman David Kohler announced he would resign if he could sell his 60 percent controlling interest in the club.

Despite protracted negotiations, Kohler has not been able to reach an agreement to sell his stake to the other three directors.

Luton are in the Second Division danger zone and after the recent defeat at Chesterfield, manager Lennie Lawrence called for money for new players. Well good luck Len, but clubs with no money don't usually go out buying players!

Paul Groves fired in his 14th League goal of the season to lift Grimsby to their first win in seven games, this one over Port Vale.

The midfielder was perfectly placed in the 71st minute to volley home from eight yards after Kevin Donovan's darting run down the right produced a teasing cross.

And Donovan could have stretched the visitors' lead further but for a brilliant point-blank save from Paul Musselwhite after he robbed Ian Bogie in his own six-yard box a minute later. The goal was hard on Musselwhite, who was the only home player to leave the pitch with his head held high.

He dived full length to his left to deflect David Smith's 30th-minute drive for a corner and moments later flung himself right to get a fingertip touch to Lee Nogan's drilled shot.

Stacy Coldcut was inches away from heading home Smith's 40th-minute near-post cross with Musselwhite flapping at the ball.

Kingsley Black nearly added a late second with a shot that flew just wide.

And Crewe wonder kid Seth Johnson has turned down a £3million move into the Premiership with Derby County.

The 20-year-old midfielder, also fancied by Liverpool, wants to stay at Gresty Road and help the little Cheshire outfit avoid relegation.

Derby boss Jim Smith, seeking Johnson after selling Lee Carsley to Blackburn, admitted: "This is a real blow. The lad has told me he feels it is his duty to help keep Crewe in the First Division. He will be happy to talk to us at the end of the season."

These are tough times for Benny Lennartsson at Bristol City. Barnsley were the latest team to beat them, this time midweek.

The Bristol City chief, targeted by angry fans, watched in dismay as his rock-bottom outfit were outclassed by a Barnsley side without a League win since December 28.

Only the brilliance of goalkeeper Bo Andersen prevented the rampant hosts chalking up a hatful. But he was powerless to stop Bruce Dyer giving the Yorkshire club the breakthrough with a classy first-half effort.

City had taken only three points from their previous 11 away games and Barnsley wasted little time in taking a grip of affairs. The visiting defence was nowhere to be seen as Nicky Eaden and Dyer both saw early efforts saved by Andersen.

But Andersen was left red-faced when he allowed a free-kick from Scott Jones to squirm through his grasp before he grab-bed the ball on the line.

All the visitors mustered in the opening half was a stinging left-footer from winger Brian Tinnion.

City's resistance was broken after 32 minutes when Dyer raced away, skipped inside Mark Shail and beat Andersen from 12 yards. Craig Hignett nailed City with a close range left-foot shot just two minutes from time.

In other Barnsley news, they have signed Aussie midfielder Robbie Enes for next season. The player, currently with glamour Sydney club Northern Spirit, trialled last week but will finish off the season in Australia, due to end in May, before starting with the Tykes in the new season.

Hasselbaink TO LEAVE LEEDS FOR LONDON?

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink may end up joining his former boss George Graham at Spurs.

The Dutch striker wants a new £25,000-a-week contract to put him on a par with top earners Nigel Martyn and Lucas Radebe at Elland Road.

Hasselbaink, increasingly frustrated at United's failure to open negotiations over a new deal, said: "We have not spoken about a new contract.

"The club has not said anything to me and money has not been mentioned."

Hasselbaink has been one of the most feared strikers in the Premiership since signing for Graham from Boavista for £2million at the start of last season.

He has hit 38 goals in 76 games and has been promised a new four-year-contract at the end of the season. But manager David O'Leary has warned Hasselbaink and the rest of the Leeds squad that the club will not be able to pay "fantasy wages."

That could drive Hasselbaink into a reunion with Graham at White Hart Lane. He threatened to quit last September when Graham was allowed to leave for Spurs, but was persuaded to stay by new boss O'Leary.

Graham is on the lookout for three new faces at White Hart Lane and wants a proven goal scorer.

He has not tried to hide his admiration for

Hasselbaink and the fact that Spurs have a guaranteed UEFA Cup spot is a big attraction to the Dutchman, who is desperate to impress his country's new coach Frank Rijkaard.

Chelsea are set to make a multi-million-pound bid for the former home of cash-strapped rugby clubs Richmond and London Scottish.

Chairman Ken Bates wants to turn Richmond Athletic Ground into the first state-of-the-art soccer training facility in London.

He is ready to buy out Richmond Football Club plc and London Scottish Rugby Football plc — if the Crown, who own the land, are prepared to extend the existing lease.

Lee Sharpe has agreed to help Bradford's Premiership push after turning down Manchester City for a second time.

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But Leeds' former England winger was simply

UK WITH CRAZY CRAIG WILSON



Kevin Stapleton stumbled into the Crazy Cabin with a furious look on his face. "I may be a whinger" he shouted. "But I'm not a Pom. I'm as Welsh as Vinnie Jones and was born with the sound of Tom Jones on the gramophone."

I sat him down, and put the kettle on. 'Boss' he said, 'It's UEFA. Do you remember how Wales played their last European Championship qualifier at Anfield? We couldn't play Italy at Cardiff — we'd have clashed with the rugby. But we're ready for the green grass of home now. We miss the Valleys; the boarded up corner-shops, the mining industry heritage centres, the unemployed steelworkers standing about on street corners.'

So why the glum look Kev? I asked.

"UEFA have ruled that our next game against Denmark should also be played at Anfield. The Vikings have complained that they won't get enough fans at Ninian Park, and now the Swiss have followed suit."

"What's the world coming to when you can't even play games in your own country?"

"Another UEFA stuff up!" I said, offering my condolences. "But what's new pussycat?"

Kevin hasn't attended Chapel since leaving the Valleys in 1988. It was the year Newport County were thrown out of the League, and Kevin had what might be called a crisis of faith.

It's not unusual. Anglican vicar, Keith Sinclair, tolled the bells of Aston Parish Church in Birmingham throughout Sundays game between Villa and Chelsea. He was protesting at a decision by the Premier League to switch the game to Sunday morning.

Although Sunday games are common, they were more or less unknown until the mid-eighties, and have never been played earlier than midday. The cleric claimed morning worship in

the area would be disrupted, and that football was becoming more important than God.

Which reminded us of a joke doing the rounds of Welsh tea-rooms. What's the difference between God and UEFA? Its obvious. God, of course, doesn't think he's UEFA.

A day or two ago, we got a call from passionate soccer Mum Pat Ash. Knowing we wield a bit of influence on the Scottish Referees Association, she wanted us to put in a word. Outraged by a decision made in the second half of a match in Greenock, she challenged teen match official James Millan after the game; an under-12s match in which her son had taken part.

After refusing to concede his error, Millan began to leave the field. And even though she's a lady, Ash landed a Hartson on the bewildered whistler.

For punching the 15 year old in the kisser, she's been banned from kids soccer for three years, sentenced to six months probation, and handed a two week suspended jail sentence. With a charge sheet that rivals Ma Baker's, Ash was also fined \$250, and ordered to carry out 50 hours of community service.

We tapped out a telegram straight away. You don't mess with women like Pat. But we recommended she give the Reverend Sinclair a call to ask about anger counselling.

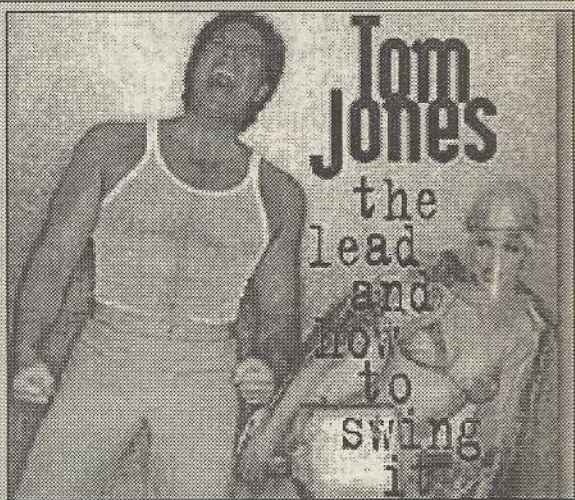
Ed McCabe recently refereed an under-nines game between Jubilee Rangers and Highcliffe Hawks in the scenic village of Sway in Hampshire. Enjoying the youthful enthusiasm of his charges, and taking in the sounds of an English country afternoon, his idyll was shattered when eight-year old Jimmy Sheppard bopped a wee adversary.

Compelled to red card the little blighter, shocked families then observed from the sidelines, as angel James ran 30 metres, leaped up and smacked the ref in the gob.

Sheppard has now been suspended, and McCabe has refused to return to the under-eights.

The battling Sheppard family have issued a statement from their shack in the woods. "It all got blown out of proportion," mumbled Jimmy Snr. while launching a wad of chewing tobacco through the gap between his front teeth. "It was all the ref's fault".

Blimey, parents today. They've no respect for authority.



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SUPPORTERS' CLUBS

Far from home? Homesick without your home team? Soccer Weekly keeps you up to date with your Australian supporters clubs.

Club: Shaymen Down Under

Contact: John Buckley

Address: 8 Shirland Street, Macgregor, QLD 4109

"The Shay is Halifax Town's ground in Yorkshire. We're a new Australian supporters club, though the Shaymen Down South has been running for a couple of years.

"They're based in London, and we're an offshoot — the Shaymen Down Under.

"I'm from Brisbane and I've never been to England. My Dad is from Yorkshire and is a Halifax fan. I'm in my last year at school, and I get a hard time at school from all the Manchester United fans. I think I've converted a few though.

"They check the results at the weekend and come in on Monday and tell me how we've done.

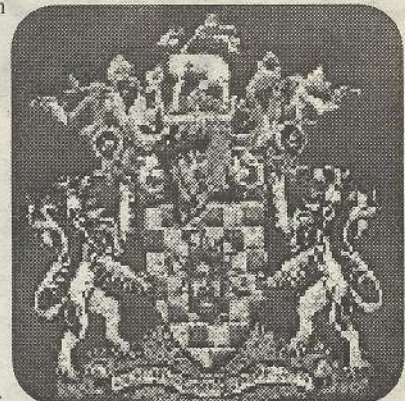
"Since I've started putting the word out I've received quite a few letters and calls.

Some Halifax supporters sent me a postcard from the UK last year, visited Brisbane and stayed over. Some more will be coming over in June.

"I'm in touch with the son of the Commercial Manager at the Shay, and the club have sent tapes, videos, and books. It means when we get together we can watch some football.

"Membership of Shaymen Down South, to which we are affiliated, costs around £12, and you get copies of the newsletter, which is more like a fanzine. I also run a website [<http://www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Midfield/8941>]. People write in and tell us why they support Halifax.

"There's news from the club, a guest book, chat room, message board. It started last year when we were in non-league football. There's been a big boom in interest now that we're back in the League and doing well."



Email Crazy Craig at magicsponge@hotmail.com

Compiled by

UK

Soccer Weekly

GERMANS TOO GOOD FOR LAURIE'S IRISH

Marco Bode broke Northern Irish hearts with a two goal blitz to ensure Germany left with a victory at Windsor Park.

For Northern Ireland it was a heaviest home defeat in four-and-a-half years and their first at Windsor Park under McMenemy.

Yet they threatened in the first 10 minutes and it was easy to believe the reports which have suggested the defending European champions were an ailing force under new coach Erich Ribbeck.

Roared on by the home fans among the capacity 14,270 crowd, Northern Ireland went straight for the Germans' throats. After seven minutes Iain Dowie headed across the visitors' goalmouth from a Keith Rowland cross.

Michael Hughes just failed to capitalise on Dowie's header on and seconds later Mark Williams almost celebrated his first cap with a goal when goalkeeper Oliver Kahn left his line but missed the ball as it came over from a Hughes corner on the right.

The Chesterfield defender's over-head kick was going just inside the post until 38-year-old Lothar Matthaus, World Cup winning captain of 1990, intercepted on the line. Within another 60 seconds QPR midfielder Morrow just failed to make contact with a long throw from Darren Patterson.

But the Irish were stunned in the 11th minute when the Germans received the injection of confidence they desperately needed.

Oliver Neville went past Kevin Horlock and crossed from near the bye-line on the right. All eyes were on Oliver Bierhoff, the £10million AC Milan striker who has taken over from Klinsmann as captain, but it was Bode who soared above the defence to power his header past Fulham's Maik Taylor.

They rode their luck when Neville went down outside the box under a challenge from Horlock but referee Cesari gave nothing.

But three minutes before the break they were given a mountain to climb as Bode smashed in Germany's second goal.

Thomas Strunz touched a free kick to Hamann who



Northern Ireland's Lennon against Germany.

stopped it for Bode to smash an unstoppable drive past the despairing dive of Taylor. Still the Irish showed their spirit. Nine minutes into the second half Dowie went down in a scramble in the goal-mouth but his penalty claims were ignored.

The visitors went close to a third in the 47th minute when Markus Babel flicked the ball just over the bar.

But after 62 minutes any doubts about the result — and any hopes of an Irish recovery — were shattered.

Germany gained another free kick 35 yards out. Hamann stepped forward and hammered a shot with his right foot which took a wicked deflection off Morrow to leave Taylor with no chance and his side with no hope.

There was an opportunity six minutes later for Dowie to claim a place in the record books, but his wild swing at the ball sent it high and wide. He still awaits the goal that will take him up alongside Colin Clarke as Northern Ireland's all-time top marksman with 13.

Dean Saunders reckons Wales can make it a hat-trick of Euro 2000 qualifying successes by following up their wins over Denmark and Belarus with another three points against Switzerland in Zurich.

'We have already managed one away win in the group and there is no reason we cannot get another. We all know exactly what we have to do,' said Saunders.

KEV THE TOAST OF THE ENGLISH TABLOIDS

Kevin Keegan. That's the only name the tabloids in England want to know about, his enthusiasm spreading in Tony Blair-like proportions. "I see us winning and the people cheering when we come off," he said.

"That's my dream." Keegan was in positive mood and even laughed off the pressure that has haunted his predecessors, namely when Graham Taylor was labelled a turnip.

When asked what vegetable he would like to be, Keegan quipped: "A cucumber — a cool cucumber — though maybe I'm not cool enough for that."

It was an impressive performance from the new coach as he launches into a four-match reign.

He has clearly decided optimism and confidence are the ingredients England wants to see after the turbulent and controversial departure of Glenn Hoddle.



Man Utd players Beckham, Cole and Scholes.

Before taking on Poland, Keegan added: "There will be this fantastic noise, louder than any England game. And it will last the whole game, not just the 30 minutes when it was electric against the French."

Keegan refused to even think about the consequences of a defeat which would be just as damaging as the day he sat on the bench when England drew with Poland in 1973,

ultimately leading to the dismissal of World Cup winner Sir Alf Ramsay.

But he is well aware of the baggage that comes with the top job in his profession.

"I know I'll be criticised," he said. "I'll be criticised for not calling up three or four strikers when we lost so many to injuries. I'll be criticised for being part-time although that won't hurt me because I've taken a lot of stick about that already."

Despite the epidemic of injuries and withdrawals Keegan still believes he will be putting out his "fantastic team. The team I put out is a very positive because we need to get the result."

We have had to send five players home and in all seven have gone but I still have a very strong squad and I'm still positive and believe we are sending out an excellent team capable of beating anybody."

And win they did. The performance has given English football a mighty lift after the awful Hoddle era post France 98.



Mr Enthusiasm

ARISE SIR SCHOLESY: KEEGAN ERA OFF TO A RIGHT ROYAL START

Kevin Keegan paid tribute to Paul Scholes after the decisive 3-1 win over Poland at Wembley on Saturday in the 'must win' Euro 2000 qualifier.

Keegan said: "He was magnificent. It was a great performance. They usually knight you if you score a hat-trick here. It should be Sir Paul Scholes."

"Don't forget he was playing in midfield today. He definitely deserved his man-of-the-match award."

"If we start believing in ourselves, get some confidence and stop knocking the team then there's no limit to what we can achieve."

Scholes' hat-trick was the first by an England player since Ian Wright scored four against San Marino in 1993 and the first at Wembley since David Platt hit four, also against San Marino, in 1991.

But the coach did have a word of warning for his ginger-haired hero after he failed to track back when England conceded a sloppy goal after 29 minutes which let the Poles back into the game.

Keegan said: "We bawled him out for that. That gave him such a shock I think he dropped his bottle of champagne on his foot. But there were a lot of good performances out there."

Tim Sherwood had a great debut. He got better and better as the game wore on. David Beckham's cross for the second goal was excellent. We expect crosses like that from him now but we've no right to."

Scholes said: "That meant everything to me. The guys up front, Alan Shearer and Andy Cole, made the space for me and it was great to finish off the chances."

"I think the second goal went in off my hand but at least the referee allowed it. It was a great day. It's the best I've ever felt but I think I'm a little way off my knighthood."

England captain Alan Shearer said: "It was Paul's day today — no-one else's — and no-one's going to take that from him. We had to dig in after we

gave them a sloppy goal. It was disappointing to go in only 2-1 up at half-time after getting such a good start."

Shearer reflected the renewed confidence of the team, who now stand second in their Euro 2000 qualifying group behind Sweden, who laboured to beat whipping boys Luxembourg 2-0.

"We're now more than capable of winning our remaining games," insisted Shearer. "We've won this one and we have a few to go but we certainly believe we can win the rest of them."

Keegan added: "All I wanted was a win and we got that. The temperature must have been in the nineties out there. It was certainly warm on the bench when they pulled a goal back but, all things considered, we did what we had to do."

But Keegan insisted that the victory made no difference to his intention to quit after four matches.

"I enjoyed it. I have said all along that I'm going to take the four games. I'm going to leave the next manager in a position that I would want to be left in if I was taking over — then I'm going to go back to Fulham Football club."

"Having said that, I can't tell you how much I have enjoyed working with the players and I'm looking forward to the next three games as well."

"They're a tremendous bunch. Forget what you think or have maybe read about cliques and problems."

"These guys are really together. You have to start thinking that English football is maybe in a better position than a lot of us would want to believe."

"I'm sure we can go on to great things. We got a bit sloppy letting in the goal but I suppose people will be saying it wouldn't be a Keegan team if they didn't let in a silly goal."

Still, England won, and won well, and that is all that matters.



Scholesy scores and the Keegan era is off to a flying start.

Compiled by and written by

Daryl Katz

UK

League highlights

SHEFFIELD UTD V OXFORD

Nicky Banger struck a dramatic injury-time winner to lift Oxford out of the First Division relegation zone with their first away victory in five months.

Banger curled an exquisite 25-yard free-kick beyond goalkeeper Simon Tracey in the first minute of added time to cap a courageous display by Malcolm Shotton's troubled side.

They had to come from a goal behind after Brazilian striker Marcelo's 15th strike of the season had given Sheffield United a 29th-minute lead. But Oxford hit back within three minutes when Andy Thomson took advantage of some slack marking to convert Banger's deep cross.

Shotton said: 'We have worked hard and deserved this. Our fans have stayed behind us and it's great to see us out of the relegation zone.'

TRANMERE V CREWE

Crewe suffered their first defeat in five matches and remain in relegation trouble in the First Division as Tranmere emphatically completed a double over their northern rivals with 3-0 victory at home.

Tranmere went ahead after 10 minutes through Scott Taylor, who scored at the far post following a long throw-in by Dave Challinor. Crewe slipped further behind in the 43rd minute when they appeared in vain for offside as Liam O'Brien scored.

The game was effectively over in the 53rd minute

when home skipper Kenny Irons volleyed in from the edge of the box for his 14th goal of the season. Taylor came close to adding a second in the final minute but his shot hit the side netting.

The defeat meant Crewe remain second from bottom in the First Division, ahead of Bristol City, and manager Dario Gradi said: 'We were not threatening in attack tonight. We will have to do what we always do - try to improve.'

John Aldridge, the Tranmere boss, said: 'It was an excellent result, they were the in-form team but we

READING V MAN. CITY

Manchester City emerged victorious in this battle of promotion of Division Two hopefuls on Saturday, defeating Reading 3-1.

There was little doubt about the result once Terry Cooke shot City in front following a 31st-minute free-kick.

Tony Barras brought down Paul Dickov and Cooke, on loan from Manchester United, placed the ball to the right of goalkeeper Scott Howie.

City's victory was virtually confirmed nine minutes after half time when Dickov put Shaun Goater clear to secure a second goal.

After 62 minutes Reading saw Alan Maybury was sent off for a professional foul and Cooke slotted home his second, again from a free-kick.



Maybury was making his debut for Reading after being signed on loan from Leeds United on Thursday.

It was little consolation for Tommy Burns' side that substitute Keith Scott, signed from Wycombe Wanderers, scored on his debut with less than a minute of the game remaining.

Reading will look back with regret on the opening 20 minutes where they dominated possession but created only a single chance, squandered when James McIntyre headed over.

Once Cooke had scored his opener, Manchester City were always in control.

Joe Royle and his side will return to Manchester in the knowledge that their season is still far from over and a swift return to Division One of the Nationwide League is still a distinct possibility.

WIGAN ATHLETIC V STOKE

Wembley-bound Wigan were denied a club record of nine straight wins by former star Greg Strong as Stoke City defeated Wigan 3-2 at home in Division Two.

Strong, once an apprentice at Springfield Park, and currently on loan from Bolton, pulled a killer goal out of the hat to grab the points in a battle of the play-off hopefuls.

A somewhat lacklustre first half was forgotten in dramatic fashion, with three goals in the first six minutes of the second half.

Four minutes after the re-start Andy Liddell opened the scoring, chesting down Stuart Barlow's pass and firing into the net.

This was soon followed up by a Barlow goal just two minutes later. From Liddell's pass, Barlow spied his

chance on the edge of the box, letting fly with a powerful drive.

But Wigan managed to throw their two-goal cushion away.

'Keeper Eric Nixon, who pulled off several outstanding saves, was challenged by Peter Thorne when collecting the ball near his line. Thorne then slipped a shot past him.

The action continued to hot up. Both teams went agonisingly close before Graham Kavanagh put Stoke level with a 30-yard jinking run, before shooting from 12 yards out.

City, who lost eight of the previous ten outings, kept their head and were justly rewarded when

Strong pounced with a perfect drive from a corner two minutes from time.

LUTON V GILLINGHAM

Gillingham suffered a blow in their quest for promotion on Saturday, suffering a 1-0 reverse at the hands of Luton Town in Division Two.

Bristol City defender Sean Dyche was recalled from Ashton Gate by Luton manager Lenny Lawrence on transfer deadline day after previously spending two months on loan at Kenilworth Road.

Dyche responded with the match-winning goal, scored on 41 minutes when he bundled the ball over the line after Gillingham goalkeeper Vince Bartram dropped

Matthew Spring's inswinging corner.

At the other end, Kelvin Davis was in inspired form in the Luton goal.

The former England Under-21 international thwarted Robert Taylor, Carl Asaba and Nicky Southall with a series of breathtaking saves to keep a clean sheet and safeguard Luton's first victory for six games.

Luton have now taken four points from the two games they have played since the club went into receivership.

WYCOMBE V OLDHAM

Superb first-half goals from Dave Carroll on 16 and 34 minutes, and Paul McCarthy on 42 minutes swept relegation-threatened Oldham away as they fight for survival in Division Two.

Egged on by their impressive new manager Lawrie Sanchez, the home side totally overwhelmed their visitors to such an extent that Oldham could only muster one shot on target in 90 minutes.

After on-loan striker Sean Devine had wrapped Kelly's crossbar, Carroll hammered Paul Emblen's cross home despite Kelly's attempt to block. The combination then working to add an almost identical second 18 minutes later.

Oldham's Andrew Gray should have scored during a rare attack only to see home 'keeper Martin Taylor produce a wonder tip-away before

home defender Paul McCarthy headed in the third just before the break.

The Oldham supporters took the defeat badly, chanting "you're not fit to wear the shirt" and "we're going down." That point later being agreed on by visiting 'keeper Gary Kelly who said "we had the luck of a team that is relegation-threatened we where out-battled, out-fought and outplayed".

Oldham manager Andy Ritchie later admitted that this was the worse performance he could remember.

But Wycombe's overjoyed manager could only see the bright side and now believes there is a chance of survival.

"We will be working our socks off," he said "It seems we must win five out of our last nine games."

PRESTON V NORTHAMPTON

Preston North End maintained their momentum in the chase for promotion from Division Two with a convincing 3-0 victory over relegation-threatened Northampton Town on Saturday.

Two superb second half goals by the home side ensured that Northampton continued their poor form at Deepdale, now with just one win in 14 attempts.

Preston's 15th clean sheet in the league and 20th of the season kept them in second place and left Northampton second from bottom.

Preston took the lead after 36 minutes. Graham Alexander, making his debut for Preston following his \$120 000 move from Luton Town on transfer deadline day, fired over a right-wing corner which the visitors failed to clear.

After a scramble in the penalty area, Kurt Nogan found Steve Basham who turned to curl a six yard left-

foot shot into the corner of the net.

Northampton had debutant Ian Hendon, a \$100 000 signing from Notts County, booked on ten minutes for a foul on David Eyres and James Hunt booked for a foul on Mark Rankine after 41 minutes.

The 21-year-old Basham scored his seventh goal since arriving on-loan from Southampton when he made it 2-0 to Preston on 63 minutes. He drove a 20-yard right-footed shot into the bottom right of the net following a Rankine pass from the left.

Preston's third came on 70 minutes when a Nogan left-wing cross was volleyed right-footed into the bottom corner from ten-yards by Jonathan Macken.

The only black mark for Preston were bookings for midfielders Rankine for a foul on 76 minutes and Michael Appleton for dissent after 85 minutes.

CHESTER CITY V PLYMOUTH

Chester City took on Plymouth at home and defeated them 3-2 after Plymouth lost their goalkeeper John Sheffield and in the meantime dashing their hopes of league promotion out of Division Three.

Sheffield departed on the half-hour when he collided with Chester striker John Murphy. He was carried off on a stretcher after being knocked unconscious but soon recovered in the dressing room, where he needed stitches for a head wound.

Plymouth took a 37th-minute lead when Dwight Marshall met Mark Sale's flick-on and fired the ball into the roof of the net.

Luke Beckett equalised 90 seconds into the second half with a curling shot into the top corner past stand-in keeper Jon Ashton.

Beckett made it 2-1 in the 67th-minute before Plymouth levelled five minutes later when Chris Hargreaves stabbed the ball home after a scrappy corner. Murphy grabbed the Chester winner 15 minutes from time to leave Plymouth without a win in five games.

BRIGHTON HOVE ALBION V BARNET

Barnet boss John Still has not given up hope of his side squeezing into the Division Three play-offs after they defeated Brighton and Hove Albion 1-0 at home thanks to a goal by McGleish.

A late header by Scott McGleish stretched his side's unbeaten run to four games, during which they have not conceded a goal.

Manager Still said: "We have had a horrendous time with injuries this season, but now we have got our better defenders back we are very hard to break down.

We must get as many wins as we can because you never know. Other clubs might collapse and we might get into that last play-off place".

McGleish was barracked throughout the game by Brighton supporters because of his Leyton

Orient connections.

However, he made them eat their words by stooping to head home after Greg Heald nodded down a Paul Wilson corner.

Lee Harrison had earlier kept Barnet on terms with a miraculous save in first-half stoppage time from an Andy Arnott header.

Still described it as: "World class" and added: "We took our opportunity with a training ground goal. That is why you work on set pieces.

"Ground-sharing Brighton have now suffered five defeats in succession at Gillingham's Priestfield Stadium, they have gone nine games without a win and four without a goal.

Manager Jeff Wood said: "It is very disappointing. Our final ball and finishing was poor and we conceded a goal from a set piece."

Compiled and written by

Daryl Katz

UK

League Highlights

MILLWALL V WREXHAM

Millwall cruised to a 3-0 victory over Wrexham on Saturday, totally dominating the visitors in this Div 2 clash.

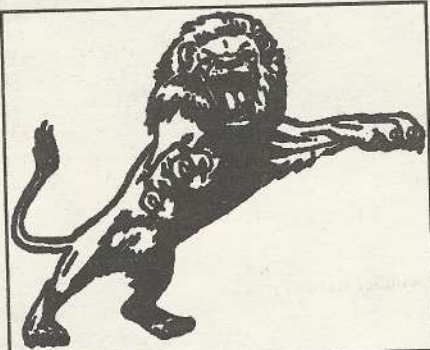
With four teenagers on display, Millwall could have been called The Lion Cubs as they comprehensively halted Wrexham's bid for a seventh successive away win.

One of the youngsters, 17-year-old Steve Reid, played a pivotal role in the game. After 78 minutes he neatly headed back for Neil Harris to drive in the home side's second goal from close range.

Ten minutes later Harris grabbed another. He beat two men following a Ricky Newman pass, drew out Wrexham goalkeeper Tommy Wright and slipped the ball into the net.

It was a sad day for the Welshmen. They were seldom in the hunt and things could have been even worse but for some desperate defence.

After 53 minutes, goalkeeper Wright was injured after bravely hurling himself at the feet of Harris.



Twelve minutes later, Mark McGregor twice rescued them with goal-line clearances from Harris and Newman in a sustained bout of attacking play from Millwall.

However, it was the first-half performance of Kim Grant that really put the Lions on the winning trail.

Grant gave the visitors a harrowing time in the opening half-hour of the match at the New Den. It must have been to the relief of the Wrexham players that Grant had to be substituted on 34 minutes after picking up an injury.

After just two minutes, Grant followed-up his own corner to fire just wide after a poor defensive clearance by Wrexham.

He almost scored four minutes later, slamming the ball inches wide following another poor attempt by Wrexham to clear their lines.

On 10 minutes Grant made no mistake when he rammed a Paul Iffil pass into the net from 15 yards.

For The Welshmen, Andy Morrell and Stuart Elliott, who were their making their debuts, were impressive but they had little support.

BOURNEMOUTH V COLCHESTER

Bournemouth maintained their push towards the first division with a 2-1 win over Colchester United on Saturday, Richard Hughes returning from the Scotland Under-21 training camp to score the winner.

Hughes was allowed home to the South Coast when Scotland's scheduled match with Bosnia was called off due to the crisis in Kosovo.

He flew to Bournemouth and made his trip worthwhile by scoring in the 40th-minute before returning to Scotland to prepare for another Under-21 international with the Czech Republic this week.

Colchester forced The Cherries to work for the points and shook the home side by taking the lead in the 20th minute.

Former Bournemouth midfielder player Warren Aspinall took a corner on the right and an unmarked

David Greene headed in at the far post.

However, Bournemouth showed their pedigree with a 35th minute equaliser. A free kick from French newcomer William Huck was only half cleared, and Christer Warren fired home right-footed from the edge of the area.

Hughes' moment of glory came five minutes later. A well-worked corner routine involving Mark Rawlinson and Eddie Howe gave Hughes plenty of room to blast home a left-foot shot from 25 yards.

Colchester came close several times to snatching a second half equaliser and Bournemouth were fortunate to have goalkeeper Mark Ovendale in good form.

On-loan Brian Launders seized on a mistake by Warren and seemed certain to score in the 68th minute until Ovendale rushed out to block the shot.

BRISTOL V NOTTS COUNTY

Bristol Rovers and Notts County battled to a 1-1 draw in a dour match on Saturday, each consolidating their mid-table position and remaining clear of the relegation battle in Div 2.

Rovers recalled Andy Tillson, who turned down a move to Walsall on transfer deadline day, to steady their defence. His assured performance underlined the fact the club would have sold him only for financial reasons.

County arrived on a winning streak, having won five of their last six games. The visitors dominated early on, and looked favourites to continue their run.

After 14 minutes, Rovers central defender Andy Thomson gave away a free-kick 20 yards out on the right. Gerry Creaney's low drive took a deflection, carrying it past Tony Williams, the young goalkeeper on loan from Blackburn.

Tillson then revived the listless Rovers, creating the equaliser with a fine ball out to the left wing. As the ball came back in, Gui Ipoua, another player Rovers are anxious to unload, turned and hit his shot past goalkeeper Darren Ward and into the right-hand corner.

County lost their early composure in the wake of the goal as the home side gained the ascendancy. Peter Beadle, the striker who left Rovers last summer for \$1.2 million, had an unhappy return to his old club, hardly managing a worthwhile effort.

County were forced to reorganise early in the second half when defender Richard Liburd was stretchered off with a knee injury, but Gary Owers arrived to bolster

their back division.

Neither side looked like producing the winner although Mark Stallard drew one diving save out of Rovers goalkeeper Williams late on.

In other games in Div 2 ... Blackpool secured an away win at Chesterfield on Saturday, virtually killing off any hopes of a promotion play-off berth for the home side.

Blackpool took the lead through Simon Sturridge after 15 minutes. The home side emerged in more determined mood after the break. Jason Lee fired in a powerful shot, which took a deflection and forced a fine save from Caig. Nevertheless, Blackpool retained their composure, and Clarkson delivered the decisive blow just before the hour following a swift counter attack from a Chesterfield corner.

Caig did well to block a Reeves shot and save off the feet of Lee as Blackpool hung on under mounting pressure. The home side almost pulled one back as Reeves failed narrowly to convert from close range after being set up by Lee.

Lee finally found the net for his first Chesterfield goal nine minutes from time to set up a grand-stand finish.

The equaliser would not come, however, and the visitors held on to take the points in a tough day at the office for them.

RESULTS SUMMARY

Nationwide League

Division Two

Bournemouth	2	Colchester	1
Bristol Rovers	1	Notts County	1
Chesterfield	1	Blackpool	2
Luton	1	Gillingham	0
Millwall	3	Wrexham	0
Preston	3	Northampton	0
Reading	1	Man City	3
Walsall	P	Fulham	P
Wigan	2	Stoke	3
Wycombe	3	Oldham	0

Nationwide League

Division Three

Brighton	0	Barnet	1
Cardiff	2	Carlisle	1
Chester	3	Plymouth	2
Peterborough	P	Mansfield	P
Rotherham	0	Scunthorpe	0
Southend	P	Hull City	P
Torquay	3	Hartlepool	0

Friday 26 March

Nationwide League

Division One

Sheff Utd	1	Oxford	2
Tranmere	3	Crewe	0

Nationwide League

Division Three

Brentford	P	Swansea	P
Exeter	0	Darlington	0
Halifax	1	Leyton Orient	2
Scarborough	1	Rochdale	0

Shrewsbury	1	Cambridge	1
Southend	0	Hull City	1

Nationwide League

Division One

Huddersfield	1	Norwich	1
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Scottish League

First Division

Clydebank	P	G Morton	P
Hamilton	0	Ayr	2

Tuesday 23 March

Nationwide League

Division One

Barnsley	2	Bristol City	0
Port Vale	0	Grimsby	1

Nationwide League

Division Two

Bristol Rovers	0	Wycombe	2
Luton	1	Reading	1
Lincoln	P	Wrexham	P
Macclesfield	P	Stoke	P

Nationwide League

Division Three

Darlington	1	Carlisle	1
Scunthorpe	1	Swansea	2

Auto Windscreens Final North

Second Leg

Wrexham	2	Wigan	3
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CARDIFF V CARLISLE

Great news for John Newman and his Cardiff City Supporters here in Australia. The recent feature in Crazy Craig Wilson's UK column must have done the trick as Carlisle United suffered a fourth defeat in five games when Cardiff City regained top spot with a 2-1 win at Ninian Park.

City looked dangerous from an early stage when Jason Bowen looked to open the home side's account, heading goalwards, only to hit the post.

It wasn't all plain sailing though, for the high-flying

yards.

Frank Burrows' side should have gone in ahead at half-time, but it looked as if it might just be the turning point for United.

However, Carlisle's confidence took a further knock nine minutes after the re-start — Jason Bowen capitalised on a defensive error to score City's second goal and his first ever for the club. His joy was obvious for all and it was a vital goal in the context of this game

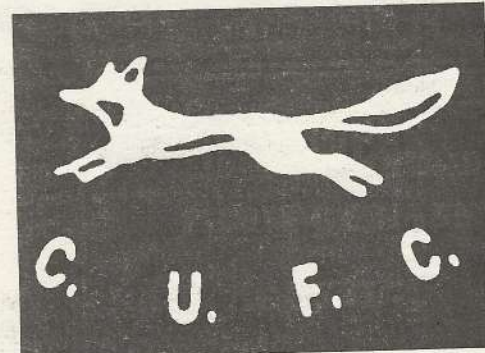


'keeper and into the net.

The visitors only held onto their lead for eight minutes, Cardiff's Jason Bowen lifted the ball into the box where it was met by Kevin Nugent, who headed past bemused Cumbrian 'keeper Richard Knight for a goal that warmed the hearts of the City faithful on a chilly day.

Cardiff should have been ahead on the half hour when Scott Young skimmed the crossbar from four

Bluebirds and hopes of a whitewash disappeared after 22 minutes, as Richard Tracey pinched a flimsy Jon Hallworth clearance, only to return the ball past the stumbling City



and Cardiff's push for promotion.

The home side survived a last minute scramble with Carlisle's Richard Tracey and substitute Marc Bridge-Wilkinson going close, but their efforts were hastily cleared by the edgy City defence leaving Carlisle to face the long road home empty-handed.

Socceroo Noddy Alston, a former favourite at Ninian Park, would be happy with the upturn in fortunes for Cardiff City.

SOUTH ^V CITY RY

FEET
BOB JANE
STADIUM
WED MARCH 31
KICK-OFF 7.30PM

